BRILL'S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY 330

BRILL'S TEXTS AND SOURCES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY 25

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON POETRY AND PAINTING

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY JAMES O. YOUNG AND MARGARET CAMERON

By

JEAN-BAPTISTE DU BOS

Subseries Editor: LEEN SPRUIT

BRILL

Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting

Volume 1

Brill's Studies in Intellectual History

General Editor

Han van Ruler (*Erasmus University, Rotterdam*)

Founded by

Arjo Vanderjagt

Editorial Board

C.S. Celenza (*Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore*)
M. Colish (*Yale University, New Haven*) – J.I. Israel (*Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton*) – A. Koba (*University of Tokyo*) – M. Mugnai (*Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa*) – W. Otten (*University of Chicago*)

VOLUME 330

Brill's Texts and Sources in Intellectual History

General Editor

Leen Spruit (*Radboud University, Nijmegen*)

Editorial Board

J. Lagrée (*Université de Rennes 1*)
U. Renz (*Universität Klagenfurt*)
A. Uhlmann (*University of Western Sydney*)

VOLUME 25/1

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/btsi*

Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by James O. Young and Margaret Cameron

VOLUME 1

By

Jean-Baptiste Du Bos

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Clio, muse of history 1689. Artist: Pierre Mignard (1612–1695). The artist was a French painter, much-admired by Du Bos. This is one of many mythological paintings executed by Mignard. Courtesy Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dubos, abbé (Jean-Baptiste), 1670-1742, author. | Dubos, abbé (Jean-Baptiste), 1670-1742. Reflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture.
Title: Critical reflections on poetry and painting / by Jean-Baptiste Du Bos ; edited with an introduction and notes by James O. Young and Margaret Cameron.
Other titles: Reflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture. English
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2021] | Series: Brill's studies in intellectual history, 0920-8607 ; volume 330 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021024340 (print) | LCCN 2021024341 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004465923 (v. 1 ; hardback) | ISBN 9789004465930 (v. 2 ; hardback) | ISBN 9789004448292 (set ; hardback) | ISBN 9789004465947 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Arts. | Ut pictura poesis (Aesthetics)
Classification: LCC NX175 .D813 2021 (print) | LCC NX175 (ebook) | DDC 700.1–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021024340
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021024341

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0920-8607
ISBN 978-90-04-44829-2 (hardback, set)
ISBN 978-90-04-46592-3 (hardback, vol. 1)
ISBN 978-90-04-46593-0 (hardback, vol. 2)
ISBN 978-90-04-46594-7 (e-book)

Copyright 2021 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau Verlag and V&R Unipress.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher. Requests for re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill NV via brill.com or copyright.com.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Ut pictura poesis.

HORACE, *Art of Poetry* (1.361)

Contents

Preface xvii

Introduction 1

BOOK 1

Preface 93

Part One 94

1 **Of the Necessity of Being Occupied in order to Avoid Ennui, and of the Attraction That Movements of the Passions Have for People.** 96

2 **Of the Attraction of Spectacles That Are Capable of Exciting Profound Emotions in Us. Of Gladiators.** 99

3 **That the Principal Merit of Poems and Pictures Consists In Imitating the Objects That Would Have Excited Real Passions in Us. The Passions That These Imitations Have Aroused in Us Are Only Superficial.** 106

4 **Of the Power That Imitations Have over Us, and of the Ease with Which They Move the Heart.** 111

5 **That Plato Banished the Poets from the Republic because of the Great Impression That Their Imitations Are Capable of Making.** 116

6 **Of the Nature of the Subjects That Painters and Poets Treat. That They Should Not Choose Subjects That Are Too Engaging.** 121

7 **That Tragedy Affects Us More Than Comedy because of the Nature of the Subjects That It Treats.** 124

8 **Different Genres of Poetry and Their Characters.** 127

9 **How to Render Didactic Subjects Engaging.** 129

10 **Objection Drawn from Paintings to Show That the Art of Imitation Is More Engaging Than the Subject Imitated.** 131

11 **That the Beauty of Execution Does Not Alone Render a Poem a Good Work, as It Makes a Picture a Precious Work.** 133

12 **That a Work Engages Us in Two Ways: As a Person in General and as a Certain Person in Particular.** 134

13 **That There Are Subjects Especially Suitable for Poetry, and Others Especially Suitable for Painting. The Means of Recognizing Them.** 138

14 **Some Subjects Are Particularly Appropriate to Certain Genres of Poetry and Painting. The Subjects Appropriate for Tragedy.** 153

15 **On Villainous Characters That Can Be Introduced into Tragedies.** 156

16 **Of Some Tragedies Whose Subjects Are Poorly Chosen.** 159

17 **Whether It Is Appropriate to Treat of Love in Tragedies.** 161

18 **Our Neighbours Say That Our Poets Put Too Much Love in Their Tragedies.** 164

19 **Of the Chivalry That Is in Our Poems.** 169

20 **Of Some Principles That Must Be Observed in Treating Tragic Subjects.** 172

21 **Of the Choice of Subject for Comedies. Where We Should Set the Scene. On Roman Comedies.** 177

22 **Some Remarks on Pastoral Poetry and the Shepherds of Eclogues.** 185

23 **Some Remarks on Epic Poetry. Observations concerning the Place and Time from Which Its Subjects Must Be Drawn.** 188

24 **Of Allegorical Actions and Characters in Relation to Painting.** 190

25 **On Allegorical Characters and Actions with regard to Poetry.** 203

26 **That Painters' Subjects Are Not Exhausted. Examples Drawn from Pictures of the Crucifixion.** 207

27 **That Subjects Are Not Exhausted for Poets. That One Can Still Find New Characters in Comedy.** 210

28 **On *Vraisemblance* in Poetry.** 215

29 **Whether the Tragic Poets Are Obliged to Conform to Geography, History, and the Chronology That We Know with Certainty. Remarks on This Subject on Some Tragedies by Corneille and Racine.** 218

30 **Of *Vraisemblance* in Painting and of the Regard That Painters Owe to Received Tradition.** 226

31 **The Disposition of the Plan. That the Arrangement of Pictures Must Be Divided into Poetic and Pictorial Composition.** 232

32 **Of the Significance of the Offences Painters and Poets Can Commit against Their Rules.** 236

33 **Of Poetic Style, in Which Words Are Regarded as Signs of Our Ideas. That Poetic Style Determines the Fate of Poems.** 237

34 **Of the Motive for Reading the Poets; That We Do Seek Instruction as in Other Books.** 244

35 **On Poetic Technique That Only Regards Words as Simple Sounds. Advantages of Poets Who Wrote in Latin over Those Who Wrote in French.** 248

36 **Of Rhyme.** 270

37 **That the Words of Our Native Language Make a Greater Impression on Us Than the Words of a Foreign Language.** 273

38 **That the Painters of Raphael's Time Had No Advantage over Those of Today. Of the Painters of Antiquity.** 275

39 **The Sense in Which Nature Is Enriched Since Raphael.** 294

40 **Whether the Power Painting Has over People Is Greater Than the Power of Poetry.** 297

41 **On Simple Recitation and Oratory.** 303

42 **Of Our Manner of Reciting Tragedy and Comedy.** 309

43 **That the Pleasure That We Take in Theatre Is Not Produced by Illusion.** 315

44 **That Dramatic Poems Purge the Passions.** 318

45 **Of Music Properly Speaking.** 322

46 **Some Reflections on the Music of the Italians. That the Italians Only Cultivated This Art after the French and Flemish.** 331

47 **Which Poetic Verses Are Best for Setting to Music.** 339

48 **Of Prints and Prose Stories.** 343

49 **That It Is Useless to Dispute If the Elements of Design and Expression Are Preferable to That of Colour.** 344

50 **Of Sculpture, of the Talent That It Requires and of the Art of Bas-relief.** 347

BOOK 2

1 **Of Genius in General.** 353

2 **Of the Genius That Makes Painters and Poets.** 360

3 **That the Impulse of Genius Determines the Being of a Painter or Poet; What They Have Had Since Birth.** 366

4 **An Objection to the Preceding Proposition and a Response to the Objection.** 372

5 **Studies and Progress of Painters and Poets.** 376

6 **Of Artists without Genius.** 383

7 **Geniuses Are Limited.** 387

8 **Of Plagiarists. How They Differ from Those Who Put Their Studies to Good Use.** 392

9 **Obstacles That Slow Progress in Young Artists.** 400

10 **Of the Time It Takes People of Genius to Reach the Eminence of Which They Are Capable.** 410

11 **On Works Suitable to Men of Genius, and of Artists Who Counterfeit Others' Style.** 415

12 **Of Illustrious Eras and of the Role That Human Causes Play in the Progress of the Arts.** 419

13 **That It Is Probable That Physical Causes Play a Role in the Surprising Progress of the Arts and Letters.** 427

14 **How Physical Causes Can Play a Part in Determining Famous Eras. Of the Influence of Air on the Human Body.** 477

15 **The Influence of Air on the Human Body Proved by National Character.** 484

16 **Objection Drawn from the Characters of the Romans and the Dutch. Response to the Objection.** 497

17 **On the Range of Climates More Appropriate to Arts and Sciences Than Others. On the Changes That Survive in These Climates.** 503

18 **That Differences between the Airs of Different Countries Must Be Attributed to the Nature of Emanations from the Earth Which Are Different in Various Regions.** 505

19 **That We Must Attribute to Variations in the Air in the Same Country the Difference Noted between the Geniuses of Inhabitants of Different Eras.** 509

20 **Of the Differences in the Manners and Inclinations of the Very Same People in Different Eras.** 513

21 **The Manner in Which the Reputation of Poets and Painters Is Established.** 516

22 **That the Public Is, in General, a Good Judge of Poems and Pictures. Of the Sentiment That We Have for Recognizing the Value of These Works.** 518

23 **That Way of Argument Is Not as Good for Knowing the Merit of Poems and Paintings as That of Sentiment.** 526

24 **Objection to the Reliability of the Public's Judgements and a Response to This Objection.** 534

25 **The Judgement of People in the Trade.** 539

26 **That the Judgements of the Public Prevail in the End over the Judgements of People of the Trade.** 543

27 **That We Should Give Greater Regard to the Judgements of Painters Than to Those of Poets. Of the Art of Recognizing the Hand of Painters.** 547

28 **Of Times When the Values of Poems and Paintings Are Correctly Appreciated.** 550

29 **That There Are Countries Where the Value of Works Is More Quickly Appreciated Than in Others.** 553

30 **Objection Based On Good Works That the Public Appeared to Disapprove, as well as Bad Ones That They Praise; And the Response to This Objection.** 560

31 **That Public Judgement Is Never Retracted, and That It Always Perfects Itself.** 566

32 **That, Despite the Critics, the Reputation of Poets That We Admire Will Always Grow.** 571

33 **That Veneration for Good Authors of Antiquity Will Last Forever. Whether It Is True That We Reason Better Than the Ancients.** 580

34 **That the Reputation of a Philosophical System Can Be Destroyed. That the Reputation of a Poem Cannot Be.** 596

35 **Of the Idea Men Should Have of the Writings of the Ancients When They Do Not Understand the Originals.** 606

36 **Of the Errors Into Which Those Who Judge a Poem on the Basis of a Translation or the Remarks of Critics Fall.** 616

37 **On the Defects We Believe We See in Ancient Poems.** 618

38 **That the Remarks of Critics Do Not Make Us Leave Off Reading Poems, and We Stop Reading Only in order to Read Better Poems.** 626

39 **That There Are Professions Whose Success Depends More On Genius Than On the Assistance That Art Can Give; and Others, Whose Success Depends More On the Assistance Drawn from Art Than On Genius. We Should Not Infer That One Era Surpasses Another in Professions of the First Type Because It Surpasses It in Professions of the Second Type.** 628

BOOK 3

Preface 635

1 **The General Concept of Ancient Music, and of the Musical Arts Embraced under This Discipline.** 637

2 **Of Rhythmic Music.** 644

3 **On Organical or Instrumental Music.** 654

4 **Of the Art of Poetical Music. Of Melopoeia. That There Was a Melopoeia That Was Not Musical Song, Though It Was Notated.** 660

5 **Explanation of Several Passages from Aristotle's *Poetics*, Chapter 6. On the Chanting of Latin Verses or *Carmen*.** 673

6 **That in Ancient Writers, the Words 'to Sing' Often Mean 'to Declaim' and Sometimes Even 'to Speak.'** 683

7 **New Proofs That Ancient Theatrical Declamation Was Composed and Written in Notes. Proof Taken from the Fact That the Actor Reciting It Was Accompanied by Instruments.** 688

8 **Of the Wind and String Instruments Used in the Accompaniments.** 696

9 **On the Difference between Tragic and Comic Declamation. On Composers of Declamation. Reflections concerning the Art of Notating.** 700

10 **Continuation of the Proofs That Show That the Ancients Notated Declamation. Some Changes to Roman Declamation That Occurred around the Time of Augustus. Comparison of This Change with What Happened To Our Music and Dance under Louis XIV.** 709

11 **The Romans Often Staged Theatrical Declamation between Two Actors, during Which One Spoke and the Other Made Gestures.** 718

12 **Of the Masks of Ancient Actors.** 723

13 **On Acting, or the Art of Gesture, Called 'Hypocritical Music' by Many Authors.** 736

14 **Of Dance, or Theatrical *Saltation*. How the Actor Who Gestured Could Coordinate with the Actor Who Spoke. Of the Dance of Choruses.** 748

15 **Observations concerning the Manner in Which Dramatic Works Were Produced in Ancient Theatres. On the Passion That Greeks and Romans Had for Theatre, and on the Study Actors Made of Their Art, and the Pay That They Were Given.** 754

16 **Of Pantomimes, or Actors Who Performed without Speaking.** 763

17 **When the Sumptuous Performances of the Ancients Ceased. Of the Excellence of Their Chanting.** 778

18 **Reflections on the Advantages and Disadvantages That Result from the Notated Declamation of the Ancients.** 784

Bibliography 791
Index of Names 807

Preface

Many people assisted us in producing this work. We must begin by thanking our spouses, Laurel Bowman and Klaus Jahn, for their patience and forbearance as we became preoccupied by our investigation of Du Bos. We devoted endless hours to puzzling out convoluted passages from the *Critical Reflections* and tracing obscure references. It is fair to say that we became a little obsessed by Du Bos, but our spouses were unfailingly helpful, understanding and cheerful.

At the time that this translation was made, we were colleagues in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Victoria and many of our departmental colleagues were of assistance at countless points in the process. We must mention, in particular, Nina Belmonte, Thomas Heyd, Colin Macleod, Scott Woodcock and Audrey Yap. Our research assistants, Harmony Ezeuko and Arnold van Roessel, were immensely efficient and helpful. Harmony scoured the library checking our references and Arnold did yeoman service assisting in the translation of passages of Latin quoted by Du Bos. We are grateful to Mme. Nicole Garnier, Conservateur général du Patrimoine chargée du musée Condé, for helpful correspondence concerning paintings mentioned by Du Bos. We owe enormous thanks to our very careful and insightful copy editor, Roslynne Bell, for reviewing the manuscript in its entirety and for saving us from more than a few embarrassments. We are also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers and, in particular, to Professor Leen Spruit for his valuable advice that assisted us in improving this work, We would also like to thank Ivo Romein for efficiently and cheerfully seeing this project through the press.

We had an enormous amount of fun producing this work. We would often hurry down the corridor between our offices to share a new discovery, perhaps the tracing of one of Du Bos' obscure and incomplete references. We would email each other late at night when we had disentangled some particularly thorny passage of the *Critical Reflections*. In the end, we developed an affection for Du Bos and a passion for his work and we very much hope that readers will come to share some of our enthusiasm for Du Bos.

The production of this book was, in all respects, a joint project. We jointly produced the translation, the notes and the Introduction. Consequently, we are jointly responsible for any errors found here.

This work is dedicated with love to our sisters, Lindsey Cameron and Lynne-Marie Young.

Margaret Cameron, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
James O. Young, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
February, 2021

Introduction

1 Du Bos' *Critical Reflections*

Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* is a remarkable and erudite book. By turns fascinating and frustrating, insightful and misguided, it occupies an important place in the history of aesthetics, philosophy of art, art criticism, art history, and related disciplines. It was enormously influential in the eighteenth century: it was in the library of every educated European for over half a century. It was certainly in David Hume's library and had a huge impact on his thought. Moreover, it continues to provide insights into questions that still occupy philosophers of art. Despite the work's importance, it continues to be under-appreciated, in part because of the lack of a good English translation, and the lack of an annotated scholarly edition in any language. This publication aims to make Du Bos' work accessible to a wide audience and to make the case that it is a work of very considerable historical importance and continuing philosophical interest.

Du Bos' book certainly deserves to be widely read by those interested in aesthetics and art. Voltaire wrote that it was "the most useful book ever written on these matters in any European country."[1] It has been described as a book that was "for at least fifty years … the most influential work of its kind."[2] Lord Chesterfield recommends it in a letter to his son: "I shall point out a book, which I believe will give you some pleasure; at least it gave me a great deal. I never read it before. It is *Reflexions sur la Poesie et la Peinture, par l'Abbee de Bos*, in two octavo volumes; and is, I suppose, to be had at every great town in France. The criticisms and the reflections are just and lively."[3] It remains essential for understanding the development of aesthetics as an independent philosophical sub-discipline. As Rémy G. Saisselin wrote, it is "indispensable reading for those who would understand eighteenth-century French and other European aesthetics, even the British."[4] A good critical edition is long overdue.

After this brief introductory section, this Introduction to the *Critical Reflections* is divided into nine additional sections. Section 2 of this Introduction provides a biographical sketch of Du Bos, one of the most important men of letters in the first half of the 18th century, but a man whose life is, today, almost com-

1 Louis Moland (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 14 (Paris: 1877–1885), 66.
2 Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: 1982), 93.
3 Letter CCXCIV, 9 December 1766.
4 Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Rule of Reason and the Ruses of the Heart* (Cleveland: 1970), 263.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_002

pletely unknown. Next (Section 3), this Introduction provides a brief overview of this sprawling, baggy, but intriguing and influential work. The subsequent sections provide more detailed expositions and evaluations of the most influential and important parts of Du Bos' work. These detailed sections include (Section 4) an assessment of Du Bos' contributions to the development of aesthetics as a sub-discipline within modern philosophy; (Section 5) an assessment of the impact of the *Critical Reflections* on David Hume; (Section 6) an overview of Du Bos' important contribution to the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns; (Section 7) a review of Du Bos' theory of the influence of climate on genius; and (Section 8) an investigation of Du Bos' views on epistemology and philosophy of science, views that are strikingly original in the context of early-18th-century France. After a note (Section 9) on the text and this translation, the Introduction concludes with suggestions for further reading (Section 10).

2 Biographical Sketch of Du Bos

Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' biography can be assembled from a number of sources. A well-connected, very likeable person, Du Bos engaged in regular and often lengthy correspondence with other intellectuals in France and throughout Europe. The surviving record of his correspondence, as well as exchanges between other known figures who mention details about Du Bos' life, have been identified by Alfred Lombard in *La Correspondance de l'Abbé Du Bos (1670–1742)*.[5] Lombard draws on earlier collections of Du Bos' correspondence, extant in the *Bibliothèque de Troussures* and the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, and he also identified collections of letters located in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

Du Bos held the position of Perpetual Secretary of the Académie française, the most important learned society in Paris, and as a result there are also the records and minutes from its meetings, from which we can learn about Du Bos' various interests and activities. The Académie française, first established in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), French clergyman and King Louis XIII's chief minister, has a membership restriction of just forty members at any given time, elected by current members. Overseeing matters pertaining to the French language, members are elected for life, and careful records of their many meet-

5 This collection has been reprinted by Slatkine Reprints (Geneva: 1969). The most comprehensive biography of Du Bos was written by Alfred Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos, Un initiateur de la pensée moderne* (Paris, 1913; repr. Geneva: 1969), and we have made good use of this sympathetic and comprehensive resource, including the many letters contained in it between Du Bos and others.

ings provide a trove of information about its activities. With regard to Du Bos' biography, there is in addition a kind of biography, known as the *Mémoire Danse*,[6] written at the request of Du Bos' sister, Mary Elisabeth Danse (née Du Bos), by her lawyer Guéau de Réversaux, that attempts to chronicle Du Bos' whereabouts during various parts of his life. At issue was Danse's claim to Du Bos' property in Beauvais, which she wanted to acquire upon his death for her sons.[7] However, despite the fact that this biographical epistle is often illuminating and helpful, we must acknowledge that it was written for a particular purpose: to generate a specific narrative to suit Danse's financial ends. Finally, it is possible to acquire biographical information from Du Bos' own writings, which reflect not only his personal and scholarly interests, but also reveal certain aspects of Du Bos' character and personality.

Little is known about Du Bos' family, and nothing at all about his childhood. The son of Claude Du Bos (b. 1625) and Marguerite Foy (m. 1653), Du Bos was one of two boys in a family of six siblings. He was born in 1670. No correspondence between family members has survived, save for a number of letters exchanged between Du Bos and his uncle and closest friend, Foy Saint-Hilaire. Du Bos' family had a long history in the town of Beauvais, and later in his life Du Bos returned there, bought a residence, and eventually held the position of 'abbé' beginning in 1711. Later, Du Bos held the honorific title of 'Canon of Beauvais' (from 1714), although he spent little time in his hometown, preferring instead the rhythm and excitement of Paris and elsewhere.[8]

Du Bos was educated in Paris. He completed a Master of Arts in 1688 and then a Bachelor of Theology in 1692. Despite earning the title of Canon of Beauvais twenty-two years later, the ecclesiastical life did not seem to hold great attraction for Du Bos. Instead, his life is better characterized as being highly social, political, and intellectual. Immediately after completing his degree in theology, Du Bos found himself in the company of Gilles Ménage (1613–1692), a French intellectual who lived on the grounds of the cloister of Paris' Cathedral of Notre Dame. Du Bos joined Ménage's entourage, known as the Ménagiana, who gathered for weekly intellectual exchanges. Some of their work was published in *Menagiana, ou bons mots, rencontres agréables, pensées judicieuses*

6 *Mémoire pour la dame Danse, seule héritière de l'abbé Du Bos, contre les sieurs de Boiscervoise et consorts* [Memoir for the Lady Danse, sole heir of the Abbé Du Bos] (Paris: 1743), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fol. Fm. 4.393.

7 The legal matter seemed to turn on whether or not Du Bos had maintained residency for a sufficient amount of time in Beauvais in order to make a claim on the residence.

8 In a letter to Pierre Bayle dated April 27 1696, Du Bos instructs his friend to send his letters to Paris, where he spends three-quarters of his time. Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 11.

et observations curieuses de M. Ménage de l'Académie française [Menangiana, or wise words, agreeable encounters, judicious thoughts and curious observations of M. Menage of the Academie française], (Amsterdam: 1693). In addition, likely through the influence of his uncle Foy Saint-Hilaire, who had an excellent reputation as a scholar of antiquity, Du Bos surrounded himself with talented scholars specializing in various aspects of Greece and Rome. Included in this set were people such as Abbé Nicolas Toinard (1628–1706), philologist and numismatist, who was later responsible for introducing Du Bos to his good friend John Locke. Du Bos also enjoyed the company of the Abbé of Signy, François de Camps (1642–1723), a numismatist; Hilaire-Bernard de Longepierre (1659–1721), a playwright who tried to stage Greek dramas on the French stage; and Antoine Galland (1646–1715), a so called 'orientalist' and archaeologist with extensive travel experience and a knowledge of Arabic and Persian. In addition, Du Bos had become friends with other, very well-known intellectuals who were, at the time, embroiled in a heated debate over the question of the day: who will triumph in the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns? At the centre of this debate was Nicolas Boileau-Déspreaux (1636–1711), a leading French poet and critic, and Charles Perrault (1628–1703), the innovator of children's fairy tales and leading voice for the side of the Moderns. Eventually, through a mutual friend, Du Bos would strike up a deep and enduring friendship with another major intellectual figure, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), French philosopher and author of the *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697). All of these figures influenced the development of Du Bos' intellectual life, but perhaps none more so than Bayle, whose influence on Du Bos' thought is unmistakeable. Their affection was mutual: the last thing Bayle read on his deathbed was a letter from Du Bos.[9]

At the same time, Du Bos enjoyed a vibrant and active social life in the years following university. There is no record that he engaged in any romantic affairs, although he acquired a reputation for a fondness for actresses, for whom he even wrote and sang songs. Voltaire described him as a "young and lively French

9 Letter from Destournelles to Du Bos from 1 January 1707, published in Charles White-Dupont, *'Notice sur l'abbé Du Bos,' Bulletin de la Société des antiquaries de Picardie* 1 (1844), 222–240. Reprinted in *Mélanges historiques, littéraires et archéologiques* [Historical, literary and archaeological admixtures] (Beauvais: 1847), 41–42: "I cannot tell you how highly he thought of you. I received the odes of de la Motte from you and sent them to Bayle, one hour before his death, with your latest letter accompanying them. He opened them and apparently read them, since I found them on the chair beside his bed." Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672–1731), French author, best known for making a verse translation of the *Iliad* despite knowing no Greek, which led to a fierce debate between the champions of the Ancients and the Moderns. Destournelles was apparently a Huguenot and friend of Pierre Bayle's.

bachelor, arguing in the schools of theology in the morning, singing with women in the evening."[10] Du Bos frequented literary and musical salons, such as the one hosted by Madame Claudine Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin (1682–1749), a famous novelist and (later) mother of the writer Jean d'Alembert (1717–1783), French mathematician and philosopher. Through her, Du Bos became (briefly) friends with the writer Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1671–1741), French playwright and poet, and many other well-known and well-connected theatre people. Du Bos' extensive familiarity with French theatre was acquired first-hand.

Throughout Europe during Du Bos' lifetime, there was an avid thirst for the study of the ancient world by examination of its remaining monuments, as well as its artistic and literary works. Du Bos himself was drawn to the study of Roman medallions, which were generating a lot of excitement among antiquarians for what they revealed about Roman history, especially the culture of the emperors. In 1695, Du Bos published *Histoire de Quatre Gordiens, prouvée et illustrée par les Médailles* [History of the Four Gordians, proven and illustrated by medallions]. His excitement over the novelty of this fairly new investigation can be seen in the first words of the work:

> The science of medallions is not as far along as the other sciences. These sciences have had their beginnings, their progress, and their new and daily discoveries. These reveal to us that they have not yet achieved their final perfection. Thus, just as scientists, astronomers, and mathematicians cannot really condemn an opinion just because it is unheard-of and new, similarly scholars of antiquity should not object to an idea just because it is new and not found in any other author. Truth is eternal, but men do not value what is presented to them all at once; time and study are needed to dissipate, little by little, the clouds that hide the truth. Reason is needed to draw their attention, despite themselves, and it must use all its power to vanquish their prejudice. Humility is needed in order to recognize that they have remained, until now, in ignorance and error. This is what makes me put forward my thoughts on the Gordians today, hoping that fair-minded historians of antiquity, far from blaming me for the novelty, will be excited to examine them in depth, and perhaps also then add remarks more knowledgeable than my own.

10 Quoted in Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 47.

Despite Du Bos' excitement over his novel thesis, which held, on the basis of his numismatic analyses that there were four, not three, Gordian emperors, it turned out that learned historians immediately rejected it wholesale. Du Bos never published on this topic again and, by the time he wrote the first edition of the *Critical Reflections* in 1719, he had already renounced his own thesis.

Eleven years before the turn of the century marked a big shift in Du Bos' activities and, eventually, his career. Eager to seek out other European intellectuals and artists, Du Bos embarked on the first of two significant and lengthy trips, beginning in 1689. The first brought him to London, Utrecht, Amsterdam, and then Rotterdam (to visit Bayle).[11] In 1690, Du Bos spent nearly six months abroad, covering many of the same places and adding travel to Italy to his itinerary. Du Bos spent time with a number of intellectuals and collectors, many of whom he came to know by way of his friendships with Bayle and Nicolas Toinard. Perhaps his most important intellectual connection was with John Locke, whom he met in 1699.

After spending time together in London, Du Bos and Locke maintained a regular, even affectionate, correspondence. In fact, Du Bos played a fairly substantial role in the popularization of the French translation of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, prepared by Pierre Coste (1668–1747). Du Bos had been sent to London to meet Locke at the request of their mutual friend, Toinard, who was eager to get Locke's advice about the French translation of Toinard's own Latin translation of Locke's *Essay*.[12] Du Bos described Locke's work as a "treasure."[13] Du Bos happened to be in Amsterdam and was able to review a draft of Coste's translation of the *Essay*. Du Bos brought a copy of Coste's translation back to Paris so that it could be printed. Du Bos wrote to Locke:

> I saw Mr Graevius[14] when passing through Utrecht, who greets you with all of his heart. I was very pleased to tell him that I saw the two volumes of your treatise on human understanding published in French. This is one piece of good news that I bring to Paris, where everyone impatiently awaits reading this book.[15]

---

11 See Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 69–73.

12 Letter 2412, Locke to Toinard, 25 March 1698.

13 Letter 2476, Toinard to Locke, 4 August 1698.

14 Johann Georg Graevius (1632–1703), German classicist and critic.

15 Letter 2612, Du Bos to Locke, 19 or 29 August 1699.

Locke asked Du Bos personally to review the French translation and to report any mistakes he made in it.[16] Beyond Du Bos' role in promoting the French translation of the *Essay* within his literary and intellectual circles in Paris, the *Critical Reflections* itself bears Locke's empirical stamp throughout. On more than a few occasions, lessons from the *Essay* appear in Du Bos' own work.[17]

In the first years of the 18th century, Du Bos entered into a political role, working as a polemicist for the Elector of Bavaria in Paris.[18] Du Bos was well-suited to the life of a diplomat: he was a polyglot, an avid researcher, and enjoyed travel. At the request of the Minister, he authored many political pamphlets, which enjoyed wide circulation and multiple reprintings. Du Bos held this job until 1716, when as the newly named Canon of Beauvais, he began to receive an ecclesiastical salary. Somehow, though, Du Bos was permitted to carry on in his job as ministerial aide, this time to Guillaume Dubois (1656–1723), French cardinal and statesman. Du Bos and Dubois became close friends, and a considerable amount of correspondence between the two is extant. Dubois' political stature was enviable: having established a good relationship with Louis XIV, Dubois became the first minister of France in 1721. Dubois' position in the Académie française turned out to be the factor that clinched Du Bos' own entrance into that learned society, just after the publication of the first edition of the *Critical Reflections* (although not on his first try).

The publication of the *Critical Reflections* was met with considerable excitement throughout France. As Lombard points out, it was very unusual for someone to be elected into the Académie française on the basis of just one work of criticism.[19] To be sure, Du Bos' connection with Dubois certainly helped, as did the fact that he already enjoyed long-term friendships with the Académie's members, dating all the way back to the completion of his studies at university. By 1721, Du Bos was named Chancellor, and then in 1722 he became, and remained until his death, the Perpetual Secretary of the Académie française.[20]

16 Letter 2726, Locke to Toinard, 21 May 1700.

17 On the diffusion of Locke's ideas in France in the 18th century, see Jorn Schosler, *La diffusion de Locke en France: L'Essai sur l'Entendement de Locke et la lutte philosophique en France au XVIII^e^: l'histoire des traductions, des éditions et de la diffusion journalistique (1688–1742)*, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 4 (Oxford: 2001), 1–260. On Du Bos' role in particular, see Jorn Schosler, *John Locke et les philosophes français: la critique des idées innées en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: 1997), 31–33.

18 Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 101.

19 Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 158.

20 *Les registres de l'Académie française*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1895), 140.

Du Bos was paid to set up meetings for the Académie's members and to arrange their funerals when they died, for which he was handsomely paid.[21]

It is clear from his writings and from the records of his correspondence that Du Bos had a very wide-ranging, curious mind, as well as an excellent memory. He sent out inquiries to his many correspondents about the latest discoveries acquired through travel, archaeology, and other scientific studies. As a completely committed empiricist, Du Bos was critical of the tendency in scientific societies in France and England to continue to pursue scientific inquiries from their armchairs. Du Bos maintained an interest in ancient coins throughout his life. His ministerial work absorbed him in both the history and the current state of politics in Europe. As the subsequent editions of the *Critical Reflections* grew from two volumes to three, the third containing an expansion of what had previously been a single chapter on ancient music, Du Bos surprised everyone by publishing on a wholly new topic in 1734: a three-volume project, *Histoire Critique de l'établissement de la monarchie Françoise dans les Gauls* [A Critical History of the Establishment of the French Monarchy Among the Gauls]. This sweeping project chronicled the history of France from the time of the Gauls in the 5th century. It was written as a critical response to the posthumously published three-volume *Etat de la France* [The State of France] (published 1727/28), by Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658–1722), nobleman and historian. Like the *Critical Reflections*, the *Critical History of the Establishment* was highly influential, this time on French historians, as well as on the great historian of the ancient world, Edward Gibbon (1737–1794). In his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), Gibbon praised Du Bos' "learned ingenuity."[22] Filled with massive amounts of historical detail, and (as is typical of Du Bos' writing) often meandering and lost in minutiae, this work has been praised for the ingenuity of its method. Historian Ian Wood explains:

> Quite apart from his knowledge, Du Bos also had a rare sense of historical methodology, which is apparent both in his source criticism, which surfaces throughout his text, and in his development of the notion of critical history—which goes some way towards combining the traditions of the *érudits* and the *philosophes*.[23]

Du Bos' personality can be seen in his writing. As we were translating the *Critical Reflections*, we got the sense that Du Bos was a kind person who had a fair

21 *Les registres de l'Académie française*, vol. 2, 531.

22 Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, vol. 2 (London: 1776), 426.

23 Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: 2013), 29.

and open mind. Much of the surviving correspondence between Du Bos and his friends and acquaintances confirms this impression. This description of Du Bos from Charles-Étienne Jordan (1702–1747), who became the Chief Librarian for Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, captures the gist of his character (even if he gets the title of Du Bos' publication wrong):

> How happy was I that day! (12 June 1733) I had the honour and pleasure of seeing Abbé Du Bos, author of the *Parallel of poetry and painting* [*sic*], one of the best works of this century. He is a man of the world who receives strangers with a great deal of politeness. His conversation is charming; his language is always pure, his expressions well-chosen; he takes up a subject and develops it with a lot of appreciation. He demonstrates his erudition, but he does so with precise ideas that indicate the decency of his mind.[24]

Du Bos died on 23 March 1742. A number of thoughtful and affectionate eulogies were printed throughout that year. Du Bos' death was apparently preceded by some sort of paralyzing attack, described by his friend Pierre-Joseph Thoulier d'Olivet (1682–1768) as an "attack of frenzy."[25] Upon his death, the son of Du Bos' friend, Madame de Tencin, wrote of Du Bos:

> He said that three things should console us with regard to the loss of life: the friends that we have lost, the handful of worthy people we have loved that we leave behind, and the memory of our nonsense and the assurance that we will never do it again.[26]

Du Bos was buried at Saint-Eustache on 24 March 1742.[27] His work continued to be reprinted long after his death.

---

24 Charles-Étienne Jordan, *Histoire d'un Voyage Littéraire fait en 1733* [History of a Literary Voyage made in 1733], 2nd ed. (La Haye: 1736), 100.

25 Letter from d'Olivet, 30 March 1742, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, f. fr. 24.417, f. 253.

26 Jean d'Alembert, *Eloges lus dans les séances publiques de l'Académie française* [Praises read in public meetings of the Académie française] (Paris: 1779), 18.

27 The Church of St. Eustache, Paris, is located in the First Arrondissement.

3 An Overview of the *Critical Reflections*

As already indicated, Du Bos' book is rather rambling and unsystematic. Du Bos is much given to digression. One of his digressions, on ancient theatrical performances, was eventually expanded into a treatise on the subject. (This expanded digression was transplanted from Volume One of the early editions of the *Critical Reflections* and became Volume Three of the 1740 edition and subsequent editions.) Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the important themes that run through the work.

Du Bos begins by considering the question of what makes experience of poetry and painting sources of a "striking pleasure" (94). (He focuses on these two arts, but in the course of the book he considers sculpture, engraving, dance, and music. Du Bos makes clear that these are all imitative arts and we value experience of them for the same reason.) His answer is that poems and paintings are imitations of objects in the world. This answer situates Du Bos in a long tradition, stretching back to Plato and Aristotle, that regards the fine arts as imitative arts. The question then becomes one of why imitations are a source of a striking pleasure.

Du Bos' answer is that imitations produced by the arts arouse in us emotions that are weaker versions of the emotions that these objects would have aroused, had we experienced them. When these emotions are pleasant, Du Bos has an easy answer to the question of why we enjoy experience of works of painting and poetry: they arouse the same pleasant emotions as the pleasant objects they represent arouse. It is more difficult to explain why we enjoy experience of imitations of unpleasant subjects: Du Bos' examples are a representation of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter and Le Brun's painting of the *Massacre of the Innocents*. We feel unpleasant emotions when viewing these works, yet we return to them time after time, apparently enjoying the experiences. The enjoyment of representations of tragic subjects is sometimes called the Paradox of Tragedy. Du Bos tells us that the experience of representations of unpleasant subjects is rewarding for two reasons. For a start, although representations of unpleasant events will arouse the emotions that experience of these events would arouse, these emotions are not as intense or enduring. Secondly, he holds that these emotions, while unpleasant, are better than the alternative: the ennui that habitually besets people whose minds are unoccupied. The unpleasant emotion aroused by Le Brun's painting is not very unpleasant, is fleeting, and better than the pain of ennui, which is an existential state of pain or suffering, and certainly more than what we today call 'boredom'. In the course of the *Critical Reflections* Du Bos supplements this account of the pleasure that we take in the experience of works of art.

Du Bos returns to the Paradox of Tragedy much later in 1.44. There, Du Bos adopts a position akin to that adopted by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Aristotle spoke of catharsis, or the cleansing, of emotions such as fear and pity. Du Bos speaks of the purging of emotions. "The faithful depiction of the passions suffices to make us afraid and make us resolve to avoid them with all of the determination of which we are capable" (318). Du Bos uses the example of Medea, the subject of an opera by Marc-Antoine Charpentier and a play by Pierre Corneille. Medea "is depicted in such a manner that we acquire a horror of the passion for vengeance, that is capable of compelling us to such disastrous excess" (320).

In the course of his opening remarks, Du Bos introduces a key concept that will play a role throughout the work: the concept of *sentiments*. According to Du Bos' view, works of art cause sentiments in us. The capacity of artworks to cause these sentiments is what gives artworks their value. But Du Bos never carefully defines sentiments. He comes closest to doing so when he says that, "The first ideas born in the soul, when it receives a lively stimulus, … we call *sentiments*" (237). The sentiments that art arouses are not, on Du Bos' view, some special sort of aesthetic experience. On the contrary, as already noted, these sentiments are fainter versions of the sentiments that objects in nature inspire in us. According to Du Bos, everyone is born with a sense of beauty, that is, a capacity for forming the sentiments aroused by works of art. He holds that, "We have in us a sense intended to judge the value of works that imitate touching objects in nature." He refers to this as a "sixth sense" (519). Du Bos also compares the sense of beauty to gustatory taste. He was among the first 18th century writers to do so and the analogy between taste in art and taste in food had enormous implications for subsequent aesthetics.

In addition to commenting on the state of mind to which artworks move audiences, Du Bos has a good deal to say about the artist's state of mind. He believes that artists feel the sentiments that their works inspire in audiences: the artist's "goal is to make us share his sentiments" (354). The same is true of performing artists. Du Bos refers to "Horace's maxim: to make others cry, one ought to be emotionally afflicted." The artist, perhaps, experiences more intense sentiments than the audience does. The artist must be in a state of 'enthusiasm' in order successfully to create. This state of enthusiasm can border on madness. Du Bos is not as clear as he could be on this point, but this state of enthusiasm is the experience of intense sentiments inspired by objects the artist experiences or imagines. Enthusiasm must be balanced by "a fortunate arrangement of the organs" (360) of the brain.[28] (Notice the physical explana-

28 Du Bos' position here is akin to a position adopted by Charles Batteux: "In order to have

tion of the creative process.) Here Du Bos is pioneering an expression theory of the arts, according to which artists express emotions in their works.

Du Bos explicitly states that we judge artworks by means of sentiment, not by means of a process of rational appraisal. In emphasizing the importance of sentiments or passions, Du Bos breaks with a long tradition of art criticism. According to this tradition, criticism is a matter for rational judgement. According to Du Bos, in contrast, we *feel* that an artwork has aesthetic value; we do not *judge* that it does. According to Du Bos, "imitations have their effect on us, they make us laugh or cry, they engage us before reason has had the time to act or examine. We cry at a tragedy before having discussed whether the object that the poet presents to us is capable of touching by itself or whether it is well imitated" (2.22). As we shall see in Section 6, Du Bos ridicules what he calls a "geometrical" (2.23) evaluation of artworks: a dispassionate and *a priori* appraisal. Experience, not reason, tells us that a work is pleasing. Someone can tell that a ragout tastes good without knowing anything of cookery or its rules. Similarly, audience members can 'taste' that a poem or a painting is pleasing.

There are, Du Bos believes, rules that artists ought to follow in creating works of art. In essence, the rules that artists ought to follow come down to being faithful to nature, that is, imitating nature well. Painters, for example, must ensure that the objects represented in their works observe the laws of physics. Du Bos calls this mechanical *vraisemblance*. (See below, Section 6, for an explication of the concept of *vraisemblance*.) Painters ought also to strive for poetical *vraisemblance*. "Poetic *vraisemblance* consists, in short, in giving to the persons in a picture their features and their known characteristics." People ought to be represented in ways that are appropriate to their age, sex, nation, and social status. Writers of pastoral poetry are criticized for peopling their works with characters who "have no resemblance to the inhabitants of our countryside or to our contemporary shepherds" (1.22). This said, although artists ought to follow certain rules, since artworks are judged by means of sentiment, we do not judge using rules, and successful artists can break the rules. Du Bos holds that,

---

the same results, painters and musicians require enthusiasm. They must forget their situation, take leave of themselves, and put themselves in the midst of things that they want to represent. If they want to paint a battle, they transport themselves, as does the poet, into the midst of the mêlée. They hear the din of arms and the cries of the dying. They see the fury, the carnage, and the blood. They excite their own imaginations until they feel moved, gripped, and frightened. Then—*deus ecce deus*—this is what they sing, this is what they paint." *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, trans. James O. Young (Oxford: 2015), 17.

"people always prefer poems that touch over poems that obey the rules" (246). He illustrates this point by saying that nearly everyone prefers Ariosto to Tasso, despite the fact that Ariosto breaks many rules of poetry.

Although Du Bos believes that copying nature is essential to the fine arts, there is an important distinction between an artist and an historian. The artist must represent "events in a way that moves us." "This is what distinguishes an artist from an historian, who must not embellish his narrative with circumstances drawn from his imagination or invent situations to make the events he describes more interesting" (201). The artist, in contrast, imagines nature as it could be. Consequently, imagination is a crucial feature of the successful artist. Tragic poets are permitted to make their heroes more admirable than ordinary people, but comic poets ought to imitate people as they actually are.

According to Du Bos, while experiencing works of art, there is no suspension of disbelief. He makes clear (1.43) that we are fully aware, while viewing a play that we are not seeing the events represented in the play. Similarly, with rare exceptions, we are not deceived by paintings. We are aware that we see an imitation and not the object imitated.

All of the arts are representational in Du Bos' view, but not all arts represent in the same way. In the course of the *Critical Reflections*, Du Bos makes a contribution to philosophy of language by distinguishing between the natural signs found in painting and the artificial signs found in language. The artificial signs of language are employed by the poet (1.40).

Du Bos makes this distinction in the context of the discussion of a question that was of considerable interest to him and other 18th-century writers. This is the question of whether poetry or painting is the more affecting art. Du Bos' verdict is that, at any given moment, a painting is more affecting than a poem. He adopts this view on the grounds that vision is the dominant sensory modality and painting employs natural, rather than artificial signs. Du Bos recognizes, however, that poetry has certain advantages over painting. In particular, a play can represent a series of events over a period of time and, in this way, have a huge emotional impact. Setting poetry to music can also enhance its emotional effects.

The view that we judge works of art by means of sentiment, in conjunction with the view that everyone has the capacity to form these sentiments, leads to one of Du Bos' most striking conclusions. This is the view that the general educated public is the best judge of the worth of works of art. Professional artists will often be less capable judges than informed audience members. This is because professional artists will tend to judge works by rational assessment of technique and fidelity to rules rather than by concentrating on the sentiments they feel. Professional artists may also be prejudiced by membership in an artis-

tic clique. They may uncritically repeat received judgements of artworks rather than relying on their sentiments.

Everyone is endowed with a sense of beauty but this sense can be refined. In particular, the sense of beauty can be improved by experience of a wide range of works in some genre. Taste can become more delicate. Even after taste has been refined, it will vary from nation to nation, and according to certain circumstances of the person who judges. Certain works will please us best when we are young, and others when we are older. Certain works please the French, given their national interests, more than they please audiences from other nations.

While there is some variation in the works that please audiences, there will be widespread agreement about which are the most pleasing works. One of Du Bos' most striking hypotheses is the view that the broad, educated public is the best judge of the quality of artworks (2.22). This public is a more reliable judge of aesthetic value than are artists and professional critics, who may be prejudiced. The broad, educated public can generally determine within a short time, certainly not more than a few years, whether a work of art is good. It may, however, take longer, on Du Bos' view, for the full value of a work to be known. He states that it may take a century to know a work's full merit. Here Du Bos is defending the Test of Time: when a work can repeatedly please audiences over a lengthy period of time, this is decisive evidence of its high value. That is, the fact that a work has consistently pleased audiences establishes that a work will continue to please.

The reputation of works, once established, will not be undermined and will continue to grow. In particular, the reputation of the best Greek and Roman poets will, on Du Bos' view, never decay. Du Bos is also confident that the best French writers of the 17th century, including Corneille, Molière, and Racine, certainly wrote works of high value. Du Bos contrasts the case of artworks with that of scientific theories: the fact that a scientific theory has been held for a long time by a lot of people does not guarantee that it is true. The difference here is attributable to the fact that people feel that a work of art is valuable, and feelings of pleasure cannot be mistaken, while there is an element of reasoning in science and reason can go astray. Moreover, people often accept scientific and philosophical views on the authority of other people, while they make their own judgements about artworks on the basis of what they feel.

Although Du Bos maintains that art is valuable as a source of pleasure or, better, pleasing sentiments, there are passages in his book that suggest that works of art can be valuable in other ways. In particular, art can promote virtue. "Dramatists worthy of writing for the stage have always regarded the obligation to inspire hatred for vice and love for virtue as the primary obligation of their art" (319). Artists promote virtue, not by providing audience members

with moral knowledge so much as by inspiring them with proper passions: "The depiction of virtuous actions stirs up our souls. Somehow it elevates and excites in us praiseworthy passions, such as love for country and glory" (118). Elsewhere, Du Bos speaks of learning "maxims" from poetry. Still, his considered opinion seems to be that we value art primarily as a source of pleasure: "We can acquire some knowledge by reading a poem, but this is scarcely the motive for opening the book" (244).

A major theme of the *Critical Reflections* is the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, which will be investigated in Section 6. The Quarrel was a debate, conducted throughout Europe, concerning the relative merits of ancient and modern writers and artists. What had been a long simmering dispute burst into passionate argument with the publication of Charles Perrault's *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* [The Era of Louis the Great] (1687). The debate continued into the middle of the 18th century in works such as Charles Batteux's *Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (1746). Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Compositions* (1759) can be seen as one of the works that sealed the victory of the Moderns.

Du Bos' contribution to the debate is judicious and well informed. He carefully examines the visual arts of the ancient world and comes to the conclusion that modern sculptors have not surpassed or even equalled their ancient counterparts, except in the sculpting of bas-reliefs. Du Bos acknowledges that it is difficult to make judgements about the relative merits of ancient and modern paintings since so few ancient paintings survive. He believes, however, that in design, expression, and artistry, the available evidence suggests that modern painters have not attained greater heights than the painters of antiquity. According to Du Bos, in poetry the ancients have a significant edge over modern writers. In part this is owing to the fact that Latin is better suited to writing poetry than modern languages and, in particular, French. Du Bos allows that in the natural sciences, moderns have made significant advances over the ancients. This is not because moderns are able to reason better than the ancients, but because moderns have had more experience, a great deal of it fortuitous.

Much of Book Two is devoted to a consideration of artistic genius, as we will discuss in Section 7. Du Bos holds that geniuses are born, not made. He breaks with traditional views on the origin of genius. In particular, he rejects the Platonic conception of genius, according to which the genius is divinely inspired. He does say, in passing, that a "poet needs divine inspiration" (241). His considered view, however, is that there is a physical cause of artistic genius. In particular, Du Bos provides a physiological explanation of genius. The genius has a well-formed brain and other physiological advantages over those who

lack genius. Artists born without this fortunate arrangement will never be able to make up for its absence.

Du Bos is interested in the question of why certain eras produce more geniuses than others. He identifies four eras when geniuses are particularly numerous. He calls them the era of Plato (the great flourishing of the arts in 5th- and 4th-century BC Greece), the era of Augustus (the period in the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD when Roman art reached its apogee), the era of Leo X (the Renaissance), and the era of Louis XIV (the period when French art thrived in the 17th century). Du Bos considers, in a quite systematic and historically well-informed manner, the hypothesis that moral, or what we would call social, causes explain why certain ages and nations produce more geniuses. He reaches the conclusion that social causes cannot fully explain the phenomenon in question, though social causes can certainly encourage the flourishing of the arts.

Consequently, Du Bos turns to consider the hypothesis that physical causes are responsible for the periodic thriving of the arts. He is sceptical about physical explanations, since he is aware that the empirical evidence is limited and science imperfect. Yet he feels that he has enough evidence to begin giving an empirical account of artistic genius. Unfortunately, the physical explanation that Du Bos gives for the flourishing of the arts is wildly implausible (Section 7). He defends the view that climate and the quality of air is responsible for the fact that certain ages and nations are more given to artistic genius than others. England is unable to produce painters of the first rank because the climate is too cold. He attributes the quality of the air to types of rock in certain countries and to earthquakes that expose harmful substrata. There is also a long discussion of the baleful effects on air quality, and genius, of Rome's decaying sewer system.

Du Bos' account of genius is not merely implausible. His position is also distressingly prejudiced. He does not believe that certain nations are inherently more talented than others. We are all, he says, children of Adam and any differences in genius are attributed to climate and air quality. Nevertheless, Du Bos' position on genius is, if not racist, then at least guilty of Orientalism and other forms of cultural prejudice. As Du Bos' editors and translators, we have no desire to minimize or excuse his prejudices.

As should by now be apparent, Du Bos takes care to advance empirical evidence for his views. He calls experience "the best teacher that humankind has" (581). As noted above in the biography of Du Bos, he was a friend of John Locke and influenced by Locke's empiricism to the point of swimming against the Rationalist or Cartesian tide in France. In the context of a discussion of whether moderns can think more critically than the ancients (according to Du Bos, they

cannot), he articulates an empiricist approach to the philosophy of science. Advances in the sciences are owed to an expanded range of experiences. Scientific advances are not a matter of inferring new principles from a set of axioms (Section 8).

Book Three of the *Critical Reflections* is, from a modern philosophical perspective, the least interesting. Nevertheless, it is, from a historical point of view, quite important. Modern philosophy of music may be said to have begun in the 15th century when several writers began to ask why the music of their day was not able to have the dramatic effects on listeners that music was reported to have had in the ancient world. We find, for example, Franchino Gaffurio and Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareia asking this question.[29] The most famous answer to this question was given by members of the Florentine Camerata, such as Vincenzo Galilei.[30] The members of the Camerata argued that ancient tragedies had been sung and early operas, such as Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and *Poppea*, were thought to be works that closely resembled ancient models. Du Bos argues persuasively that the Camerata's conception of ancient tragedy was seriously flawed. The debate about the relative merits of ancient and modern music lasted almost the end of the 18th century. It is still being contested by Thomas Robertson as late as 1784.[31] Du Bos does not so much contribute to this debate as remove some of the misconceptions about ancient music, and ancient theatrical performances in general. His contribution is a necessary first step towards an assessment of ancient performances.

Book Three is a detailed investigation of the performance practices of the ancient stage. Du Bos advances a number of hypotheses that would have been novel in their day. In particular, he argues that most ancient tragedies were not sung in anything like the way that modern operas are sung. They were notated. That is, the way in which they were to be declaimed was noted on the text, but they were not sung. In conjunction with this point, Du Bos notes that the extension of the term 'music' was much greater in the ancient world than it is in the modern. Acting and the declamation of tragedies came under the rubric of music in the ancient world, while they do not do so any longer. Du Bos also writes extensively about pantomimes in the ancient world. The vol-

29 Franchino Gaffurio, *The Theory of Music*, trans. Walter Kurt Kreyszig (New Haven: 1993). First published in 1492 as *Theorica musicae*. Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareia, *Musica Practica*, trans. Clement A. Miller (n.p., American Institute of Musicology: 1992). First published in 1482.

30 Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, trans. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: 2003). First published in 1582.

31 Thomas Robertson, *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts* (London: 1784).

ume concludes with a discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of ancient and modern stagecraft. Book Three is now primarily of interest to students of the history of classical scholarship. Remarkably, however, Du Bos is conspicuous by his absence from standard histories of classical scholarship. This strikes us as an egregious oversight. However, even for the general reader, Book Three is full of fascinating anecdotes and information. It is still worth reading if only for this reason.

This section of the Introduction is intended only to provide the reader with a survey of the main themes of the *Critical Reflections*. Subsequent sections will provide a more detailed introduction to the most important of these themes and to themes of continuing philosophical interest.

4 Du Bos and the Development of Philosophy of Art

No single person deserves the title of the originator of modern aesthetics. An idea is often "in the air" at a particular time. In the first years of the 18th century, the idea of aesthetics—the idea of the study of human response to works of art and other beautiful items—was just such an idea. This idea occurred to several people at around the same time. One of them was Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), author of *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times* (1711). In Britain he was joined by Joseph Addison (1672–1719), whose *Pleasures of the Imagination* first appeared as a series of essays in *The Spectator* in the course of 1712. In Switzerland, we find Jean-Pierre de Crousaz (1663–1750), author of *Traité de Beau* (1715). Germany's Christian Wolff (1679–1754) was the author of *Rational Thoughts on God, the World, and the Soul of Man* (1720), a book that made contributions to thinking about art. Du Bos deserves to be ranked with these writers as among the originators of modern aesthetics. Arguably, he was the most important and influential of them all.

All of these figures made important and influential contributions to aesthetics. Shaftesbury contributed two signature ideas: humans have a sense of beauty and this sense detects harmony and good proportion. Addison talked of pleasures of the imagination. These can provide us with "pleasing astonishment," "agreeable surprise," and other rewarding states. Here Addison can be seen as arguing for the idea that humans experience what was subsequently called 'aesthetic emotion.' (Du Bos was familiar with Addison's writings. He approvingly cites the *Pleasures of the Imagination* in the *Critical Reflections* and speaks highly of Addison as a poet.) Shaftsbury and Addison both talk about being pleased by a kind of intellectual apprehension of the objects of our experience. Crousaz says something broadly similar. We are pleased by an

intellectual apprehension of variety. Wolff, a philosopher much influenced by the rationalism of Leibniz, maintains that we are pleased by an apprehension of unity amidst variety.

Du Bos has a view of aesthetics that differs dramatically from that of his contemporaries. For all of their differences, Shaftesbury, Crousaz, and others regarded our engagement with works of poetry and painting (as well as other objects) as essentially intellectual or cognitive. Du Bos, in contrast, held that we sense or feel the beauty of poems and paintings (and other works of art). Works of art arouse in us emotions or, as Du Bos calls them, passions or sentiments. Paul Guyer notes, "Du Bos can … be regarded as recognizing as central elements of aesthetic response both the free play of all our mental faculties and of the stimulation of our emotions in particular."[32] According to Du Bos, poetry and painting do not arouse some special aesthetic emotion. They are not valued because they provide us with a kind of surprise or satisfaction. Rather, these arts arouse versions of the same emotions that are aroused by experience of the objects represented.

Du Bos stands at the beginning of a long tradition in modern aesthetics of seeing art as essentially involving an emotional response. As noted above, the value of art lies in its capacity to arouse emotions that audience members value. The emotions aroused are the emotions that would be aroused by experience of the objects represented in a poem or painting. This leaves Du Bos to confront the Paradox of Tragedy, and his solution is that unpleasant emotions are better than the ennui of daily life.

Du Bos does more than hold that artworks have an emotional impact on audience members. He also holds that successful artists must be in a certain sort of emotional state. Du Bos believes that artists, in order successfully to create, must be in an emotional state that he calls "enthusiasm". This is a state of high emotional arousal (sometimes bordering on madness) that artists feel when confronting the objects they represent, or the *vraisemblance* of objects that they imagine. Successful artists, on Du Bos' view, are particularly susceptible to emotions. They then create works that arouse in audience members the emotions that they have felt. Here we see in Du Bos the roots of the expression theory of the arts. This is the view that artists feel certain emotions and they express these emotions in their works. On some versions of the expression theory of the arts, audience members then acquire the emotions that artists have previously felt.

32 Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics: Volume 1: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: 2014), 32.

In understanding the value of art in terms of the emotional responses that it inspires, Du Bos can be seen as introducing subjectivism into philosophy of art. Ernst Cassirer makes something like this point when he writes that, "Du Bos is the first to establish introspection as the specific principle of aesthetics and to defend it against all other merely logical methods as the real source of all sound knowledge."[33] Audience members consult their own feelings in determining whether a work of art is valuable or not. Audience members decide for themselves whether they are pleased by the sentiments a work arouses in them. In other words, in evaluating works of art, audience members direct their attention to themselves, not to features of the work of art that they contemplate. According to Du Bos, the questions 'Does the work please, or not?' and 'Is the work, on the whole, good or bad?' amount to the same question. "For us, the greatest painter is the one whose works give us the greatest pleasure" (94). Later he adds that, "poems and paintings are only good works to the degree that they move us and engage us" (518).

In these passages Du Bos adopts a response-dependent account of beauty or aesthetic value. That is, beauty is not an intrinsic property of a poem or painting. Rather, it is a property that a work of art has in virtue of its impact on an audience member. A poem or painting is beautiful because it pleases an audience member.

Du Bos allows that, after the fact of the experience of a work of art, an account can be given of why audience members have the subjective responses (sentiments) that they do. We may be able to explain, for example, that people feel pity by pointing out that a painting represents something that, if itself were experienced, would arouse pity. Or we can account for the emotional response of audience members by noting that a work follows certain rules: perhaps the subject represented is of particular interest to some group or it achieves poetic *vraisemblance*. These *ex post facto* explanations may explain why audience members react in the way that they do, but a work is successful because audience members react in a certain manner. Audience members can be, and typically are, completely ignorant of why they react as they do to a work of art.

Du Bos rejects a rationalist tradition resulting from the application of Cartesian thought to aesthetics. This tradition finds expression in, for example, the work of Roland Fréart de Chambray (1606–1676). He was the author of *L'Idée de la perfection de la peinture demonstrée par les principles de l'art* (1662). This

33 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: 1951), 303.

work enjoyed a considerable vogue. It was often reprinted, it was translated into English in 1668, and was published in an Italian translation as late as 1809. This work, as its title—*The Idea of the Perfection of Painting Demonstrated from Principles of Art*—suggests, argues that there are rules of art and that one can infer from them whether some painting is successful. In particular, success in art is a matter of getting the "costume" right. (The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines costume, in this sense of the word, as "The custom, manner, or style of the period which a particular piece of art is intended to represent, considered in terms of accuracy in representation; the clothes, furnishings, and other objects appropriate to the time and place to which the scene or individual represented belongs.") Other writers even compared painting to geometry. For example, Abraham Bosse wrote that the "noble *art of painting* must be based for the most part on correct and rule-governed reasoning, which is to say, geometrical and, consequently, demonstrative."[34] Roger de Piles, in his *Cours de peinture par principes avec un balance de peintres* [Course on Painting by means of Principles, with a Comparison of Painters] (1708), evaluates painters on the basis of four criteria (composition, drawing, colour, and expression) and assigns each a numerical score. Other writers spoke of extending the geometrical method to the study of poetry. Jean Terrasson wrote that, "Any man who does not think of any literary matter as Descartes prescribes to think about physical matters, is not worthy of the present century … Nothing prepares better than mathematics to properly judge works of mind."[35] Du Bos was not engaged in hyperbole when he criticized 'geometrical' critics.

In certain respects, Du Bos' *Critical Reflections* build on earlier French writings on the arts. André Félibien is mentioned only once (as an authority on the interpretation of Rubens' paintings for Marie de' Medici), but his influence is apparent elsewhere. As early as his preface to *Conférences pour l'année 1667*, Félibien had ranked genres of paintings. The highest form of painting, he believed, is history painting. It is followed by portraiture, animal paintings, landscapes, and, lastly, still lifes. Similarly, Du Bos (1.10) ranks history painting as the highest genre and still lifes, such as paintings of flower baskets, as much lower. He suggests that portraits are intermediate between history paintings

34 Abraham Bosse, *Sentimens sur la distinction des diverses manieres de peinture, dessein, et gravure, et des originaux d'avec leur copies* [Opinions on the Distinction about the Different Styles of Painting, Design, and Engraving, and of the Originals in Comparison to their Copies] (Paris: 1649), sommaire.

35 Jean Terrasson, *Dissertation critique sur l'Iliade d'Homère* [Critical Dissertation on Homer's Iliad] (Paris: 1715), lxv.

and still lifes since they will primarily engage the sentiments of people who are acquainted with the sitter. Du Bos ranks painting genres according to the intensity of the sentiments that the objects represented arouse. For example, history painting is a higher form of painting than still life because historical subjects arouse more power sentiments than flowers and other subjects of still life painting.

Du Bos is not opposed to the idea that there are rules of art. On the contrary, he explicitly endorses the idea that there are rules for the compositions of paintings and poems. At a number of points in the *Critical Reflections* (for example, 1.30) Du Bos acknowledges that it is important to get the costume right. He holds that the painter ought to achieve "mechanical *vraisemblance*." That is, paintings ought to be consistent with the laws of nature. Du Bos goes on to say that painters ought to strive for "poetic *vraisemblance*." He writes that,

> Poetic *vraisemblance* consists in giving to characters passions that are appropriate to their age, their social class, the temperament they are given, and the interest that they are supposed to take in the events. It consists in observing in one's picture that the Italians call *il costume*, that is to say, one must make a painting consistent with what we know of the customs, habits, architecture, and arms of the people that one intends to represent (226).

He makes similar statements about the need for poets to strive for poetic *vraisemblance*. Here is one such passage:

> I believe that a tragic poet compromises his art when he sins too greatly against history, chronology and geography in advancing facts that are contradicted by these sciences. The more widely known this contradiction is, the more harmful it is to his work (218).

However, Du Bos parts from many of his predecessors in saying that *vraisemblance* is not the sole desideratum in poetry and painting. The real goal of these arts is to make us feel certain sentiments.

Du Bos is quite explicit that we judge works of art by sentiment, not by reason. The question 'Is the work, on the whole, good or bad?' is identical to the question 'Does the work please, or not?' The question of whether a work is good or not "is not left to reason. It must submit to the judgement that sentiment pronounces. Sentiment is the competent judge of this issue." This passage is followed by one of the most striking in all of the *Critical Reflections*:

> Do we use reason to determine whether a ragout is good or bad? Did you ever, after having applied geometrical principles to the flavour, determine the properties that each of the ingredients contributes, go on to discuss the proportions preserved in their mixture, in order to decide whether the ragout is good? You never have. We have a sense that makes us recognize whether the cook has followed the rules of his art. We taste the ragout and, even without knowing these rules, we know that it is good. It is the same with works of wit and pictures made to please us by touching us (519).

Du Bos did not introduce the idea of taste into reflection on the arts. Both Addison and Shaftesbury speak of taste or good taste in connection with the arts. Du Bos, however, stressed the analogy between gustatory taste and taste in the arts. Subsequent writers, including Hume, explicitly acknowledged that taste in the arts is akin to taste in culinary matters.

Du Bos' reliance on sentiment as the test of artistic excellence gave rise to a problem that he probably did not fully recognize. It is a problem that he certainly did not solve. This is the problem of finding a standard of taste. This is a problem for anyone who, like Du Bos, adopts subjectivism about the value of artworks. Suppose that beauty is a response-dependent property as subjectivism entails, and that audience members have different responses to a work of art. One audience member finds the work beautiful and the other does not. On such a supposition, it appears that a work has beauty relative to one audience member but is not beautiful relative to the other. Hume recognized this consequence of subjectivism when he wrote that,

> a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty (ST 7).[36]

This conclusion, in turn, leads to the hypothesis of faultless disagreement: one audience member judges that a work is valuable and the other judges that is not valuable and yet neither of them is mistaken. The hypothesis of faultless

36 David Hume, "Of the standard of taste", in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, edited by Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose, 4 volumes (London: 1874–1875), volume 3. Hume's essays are cited by initial letters of the titles and paragraph numbers.

disagreement, however, appears problematic and would have appeared problematic to Du Bos.

The relativity of beauty (or aesthetic value) is problematic because it seems that some aesthetic judgements are better than others. As Hume famously said, the judgement that Ogilby is as a great poet as Milton is as absurd as the judgement that a pond is as extensive as the ocean or a molehill is as high as Teneriffe. Du Bos would have agreed. Du Bos is very comfortable making the judgement that the plays of Molière are greater than those of Charles Cotin. We need, however, some standard by which we can judge aesthetic judgements and say that it is wrong that the work of Cotin or Ogilby is valuable.

Du Bos did not fully appreciate the need for a standard of taste or how difficult it would be to provide one. Du Bos was not fully aware of the need for a standard of taste because he believed that everyone has a sense of beauty and that this sense is essentially the same in everyone. The sense of beauty can be hampered by prejudice and it can be improved by practice but, on Du Bos' view, everyone has the capacity to experience the beauty of a work. Du Bos believes that, in due course, everyone will come to the same verdict about the value of a particular poem or painting.

A crucial difference between Hume, in "Of the Standard of Taste," and Du Bos is that Hume believed that agreement about the value of a given work of art is by no means as widespread as Du Bos believes. Du Bos himself grants that there will be differences of opinion.

> To want to persuade a man who prefers colour to expression, in accordance with his own feelings, that he is wrong, is to want to persuade him to take more pleasure in seeing Poussin's paintings than Titian's. The matter depends no more on him than it does on a man, whose palate is formed in such a way as to prefer champagne to Spanish wine, to change his taste and prefer the Spanish wine to French (345).

Du Bos seems to grant that we have no basis for judging that the Titian-lover's judgements are worse than those of the Poussin-lover's. Similarly, one might think, some people are just formed in such a way that they prefer Cotin to Molière. If these people judge that Cotin's plays are excellent, or that they are better than those of Molière, they seem not to have made a mistake.

And yet, as Hume notes, this seems wrong. By introducing subjectivism, Du Bos introduced a problem that philosophers of art grappled with for the rest of the 18th century. Hume, Lord Kames, Alexander Gerard, Thomas Reid, Edmund Burke, and others all had a crack at establishing a non-subjectivist standard of taste. The search for such a standard is still with us. Some philosophers are

willing to embrace the subjectivist view that all audience members have their own standard of taste, a standard provided by their personal sentiments. Others resist this suggestion.

Likely Du Bos went too far in stressing the importance of sentiment, that is, subjective emotional responses to artworks. Our apprehension of art is, in part, cognitive. Although Du Bos occasionally mentions that a little knowledge can be gleaned from works of art, he is adamant that providing knowledge is not an important function of art. Many philosophers and artists, from Aristotle and Horace on, have regarded the fine arts as sources of knowledge and, in particular, as sources of moral knowledge. These philosophers include Batteux in the 18th century and philosophers today. If art is a source of knowledge, then there is a prospect for providing a standard of taste that is, at least in part, distinct from individual emotional subjectivity. There can be a fact of the matter that some work of art is valuable qua source of knowledge.

Even if Du Bos went too far in stressing that human responses to art take the form of sentiments, of subjective emotional responses, his work was a valuable corrective to preceding accounts of responses to art. Moreover, we find traces of his thought in virtually every major 18th century writer on philosophy of art. Kant is a major figure who does not mention the *Critical Reflections*, but by the time he wrote, Du Bos' ideas had been so thoroughly assimilated that they had become part of the general conceptual landscape.

In France, Du Bos had a major impact on the thought of Voltaire.[37] He described Du Bos as "a very wise, very learned, and very esteemed man" and, according to Voltaire, "All artists read with profit his *Reflections* on poetry, painting, and music."[38] Du Bos' influence is found at a number points in Voltaire's writings. He adopts Du Bos' subjectivism, writing that, "In order to judge poets, it is necessary to know how to feel."[39] Voltaire agreed with Du Bos that there have been four ages where the arts particularly flourished and he agreed with Du Bos' assessment of which ages they have been. Voltaire also agreed with one of Du Bos' controversial views: the belief that national character is affected by matters such as climate. (As is well known, this belief had a considerable impact on Montesquieu's thinking in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748).) Voltaire drew on Du Bos when arguing against the thesis that ancient arts were inferior to modern. On other matters, Voltaire took issue with Du Bos but, significantly, he believed that Du Bos' views were worthy of refutation. For example, Du Bos

37 For details, see David Williams, *Voltaire: Literary critic*, [Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century] 48 (Geneva: 1966), Ch. 4.

38 Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, 11; vol. 14, 66.

39 Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 8, 319.

held that the same subject matter can be endlessly treated in a novel manner by artists of genius. Voltaire explicitly disagreed. Voltaire rejected Du Bos' explanation of why certain eras are more productive of geniuses than others.

The most intriguing connection between Du Bos and Voltaire may be found in Voltaire's epic poem, *La Henriade*. Voltaire wrote that, "The Abbé Du Bos, a man of very great sense, wrote his treatise on poetry and painting in about 1714. He found that in all of the history of France there was only one real subject for epic poetry: the destruction of the [Catholic] League by Henry the Great."[40] This passage has led some people to believe that Du Bos was the inspiration for *La Henriade*, which treats precisely the subject Du Bos mentions. Other commentators have held that Du Bos could not have inspired Voltaire's epic since the *Critical Reflections* were not published until 1719 and Voltaire is known to have begun his epic in 1717. Du Bos' ideas had, however, been in circulation for a period before the book was published. Perhaps Voltaire was right in holding that the book was written by 1714, and perhaps Voltaire was inspired by Du Bos. A coincidence seems unlikely, particularly in light of Voltaire's mention of Du Bos in this context.

Du Bos' influence on Rousseau is well-documented.[41] This influence is most marked in the *Lettre à M d'Alembert sur les spectacles*. Du Bos is only mentioned once by name,[42] and in a passage where Rousseau expresses scepticism about Du Bos' belief that we are less moved by representations than we are by the objects that they represent. In other passages, however, Rousseau copies Du Bos word for word or almost word for word. For example, both Rousseau's *Letter* and the *Critical Reflections* contain the sentence, theatre's "most common goal is to excite in us sentiments opposed to those that it gives to its characters." (1.44) Another sentence from the next page of the *Critical Reflections* appears on the next page of Rousseau's *Letter*. Like many 18th-century writers, Rousseau seems to have been struck by Du Bos' discussion of gladiators. It seems unlikely that it is coincidental that Rousseau, like Du Bos, compares gladiatorial combats to the theatre. On certain issues, Rousseau takes issue with Du Bos' views, but there can be no doubt that the *Critical Reflections* were open in front of Rousseau as he wrote the *Letter*.

---

40 Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 14, 553.

41 James F. Jones, Jr., "Du Bos and Rousseau: a question of influence," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 127 (1974), 231–241.

42 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A letter from M. Rousseau, of Geneva, to M. D'Alembert, of Paris, concerning the effects of theatrical entertainments on the manners of mankind* (London: 1759), 25.

Charles Batteux does not mention Du Bos in *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, but internal evidence indicates that Batteux had certainly read the *Critical Reflections*.[43] The theme of art as the imitation of nature was older than Du Bos, but he certainly did a great deal to perpetuate this theme in the 18th century. The idea that all fine arts imitate nature is central to *The Fine Arts*. There is a subtle but important difference between Du Bos and Batteux. According to Du Bos, art imitates nature as it really is. According to Batteux, art imitates *belle nature*, that is, an idealized model of reality created by the artist. Batteux agrees with Du Bos that the artist creates while in a state of 'enthusiasm.' Again, however, there is a subtle difference between the two abbés. According to Batteux, artists are not in the emotional state they express in their works. Rather, they are in a state that simulates these emotions. In other passages it seems clear that Batteux is arguing against Du Bos. For example, Batteux takes on, point by point, the arguments that Du Bos gives for thinking that Latin is a better language for writing poetry than is French. As will be noted below, Du Bos seems likely to have influenced Batteux's views on how music can be expressive and an imitative art.

Du Bos had a significant impact on the *Encyclopaedia* of Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. Louis, chevalier de Jaucourt, was the author of many of this work's articles on the fine arts and he cites Du Bos in the articles on Painting, Modern Painting, Inscription, Landscape Painting, and Landscape Painter. In fact, a large chunk of the article on Landscape Painting is lifted wholesale out of *Critical Reflections* 1.6. The article on Landscape Painter also appropriates from this chapter. Du Bos is quoted at length and by name in the article on Inscription. He is mentioned in passing in the articles on French Language and Tragedy. His influence is also found in unexpected places. For example, the article on Opéra des Bamboches contains a passage taken almost word for word from the *Critical Reflections*. Perhaps most importantly, however, Du Bos' influence is manifest in an article in which he is not mentioned. His subjectivism is fully apparent in the article on taste, where we read that, "In order to have taste, it is not enough to see and to know what is beautiful in a given work. One must feel its beauty and be moved by it."[44]

---

43 Charles Batteux, *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, trans. James O. Young (Oxford: 1746/2015).

44 Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert, Denis Diderot, Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, and [François-Marie Arouet] de Voltaire. "Taste," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (Ann Arbor: 2003). http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.168

As well as the *Encyclopaedia*, Diderot's own writings clearly display the influence of the *Critical Reflections*. In some cases, Diderot's critical judgements about certain paintings are lifted straight out of Du Bos. For example, Diderot's interpretation of Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* is identical to Du Bos'. Diderot draws upon the *Critical Reflections* in his criticism of Batteux.

Parts of the *Critical Reflections* that, today, are of least interest were discussed at considerable length in 18th-century France. Here we have in mind Du Bos' discussion of ancient music and theatre. It is, for example, discussed in some detail in Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*.[45] Condillac, like Du Bos, was heavily indebted to Locke.

Du Bos significantly influenced thinking about art in mid-18th-century Germany. Indeed, Du Bos' biographer, Lombard, judges that Du Bos' impact was greatest in German-speaking countries.[46] Du Bos was a major influence on Johann Jakob Breitinger's *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740). Subsequently, Moses Mendelssohn, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Johann Joachim Winckelmann adopted some of Du Bos' views and argued against others. We know, moreover, that Du Bos was read by Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1738. As a result, Du Bos contributed to the taste for all things French at the court in Berlin and contributed to the intellectual milieu of the Berlin Academy.

Du Bos certainly had some impact on Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the founder of the German school of aesthetics. Baumgarten was originally a Wolffian and would have had a thoroughly rationalist approach. However, the *Critical Reflections* came to the attention of the Wolffian school and they became interested in issues in philosophy of art. There is certainly evidence that Baumgarten, in particular, was aware of Du Bos' thought: The catalogue of his books indicates that he owned a copy of the *Critical Reflections*.[47] Lombard attributes to Du Bos' influence the fact that Baumgarten gave a greater importance to sentiment than had previously been seen in German thinking about art.[48] The relationship between Du Bos and Baumgarten certainly deserves further study.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing found the *Critical Reflections* important enough that he prepared a German translation of book three of Du Bos' work. Moreover, Du Bos' influence is discernable in a number of passages in Lessing's *Lao-*

(accessed 28 April 2017). Originally published as "Goût," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 7 (Paris: 1757), 761–770.

45 Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine de connaissances* (Paris: 1746).

46 Lombard, A. *L'Abbé Du Bos* (see n. 5), 351.

47 Stefanie Buchenau, *The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge: 2013), 11.

48 Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 362.

coon, though the Frenchman is never mentioned.[49] He closely follows Du Bos when he says that the goal of science is truth and the goal of the arts is pleasure. Many of the questions Lessing addresses are questions that had occupied Du Bos. For example, he discusses which subjects are suited to poetry and which to painting. He adopts Du Bos' views on allegory. In a letter to Mendelssohn, Lessing adopts, without attribution, a doctrine that is clearly Du Bos': "All emotions, even the most disagreeable, are enjoyable insofar as they are emotions."[50] Even fairly late in the century, Johann Georg Sulzer, in his *General Theory of the Fine Arts* (1771–1774) acknowledged the importance of Du Bos. Sulzer called Du Bos, "the first of the modern critics to construct a theory of art upon general principles."[51]

Some of Du Bos' beliefs strike modern readers as deeply misguided. Nevertheless, sometimes these out-dated beliefs exerted considerable influence in the 18th century. One of these was Du Bos' belief that climate, soil, and related matters exert a considerable influence on national character and on the development of the arts in various countries. As we have seen, French thinkers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu were influenced by Du Bos' views on climate. It is less well known that Johann Winckelmann was also heavily influenced by Du Bos' climate theory.[52] Winckelmann cites Du Bos by name in his *History of Ancient Art*. Herder also adopted Du Bos' views on the influence of climate and soil.[53]

Du Bos' claim, at the beginning of the *Critical Reflections*, that humans desire above all to be occupied, even by unpleasant spectacles, struck a chord with many thinkers in Europe, including Moses Mendelssohn. Some agreed with him (Hume was sympathetic up to a point) and others disagreed. Mendelssohn was one of those who disagreed. In his essay, "On Sentiments," Mendelssohn explicitly discusses Du Bos' view that we enjoy tragic art as a way of avoiding ennui. Mendelssohn writes that Du Bos:

---

49 For a good discussion of Lessing's debt to Du Bos, see Konrad Leysaht, *Dubos et Lessing* (Greifswald: 1874).

50 Quoted in Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, 368–369.

51 Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Thomas Christensen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch* (Cambridge: 1995), 25.

52 For a rather unreliable account of the relationship between Du Bos and Winckelmann see, Richard Woodfield, "Winckelmann and the Abbé Du Bos," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 13 (1973), 271–275.

53 See Armin Hajman Koller, *The Abbé Du Bos—His Advocacy of the Theory of Climate* (Champaign, Ill.: 1937).

> heaps up countless examples of amusements of entire nations, in which cruelty appears to have had a far greater part than humanity has. As proof that souls long merely to be moved, even if they have to be moved by unpleasant images, he cites the gladiatorial arenas, jousting tournaments, bullfighting, the cock fights of the English, and finally the tragic stage.

Mendelssohn uses a *reductio ad absurdum* to criticize Du Bos' position. He writes that, "according to Du Bos's hypothesis, human beings would have to be just as pleased by disgust, regret, or terror since the soul is moved by them. But experience testifies to the contrary."[54]

In his 1761 "Rhapsody or Additions to the Letters on Sentiments," Mendelssohn adopts a somewhat more charitable view of Du Bos' position. There he admits that, "it was not right for me to criticize Du Bos for the saying that the soul longs merely to be moved, even if it is to be moved by unpleasant representations." This is only the case, however, since Mendelssohn grants that some people may not be "sensitive enough to sympathize with the suffering being."[55] Mendelssohn still finds it implausible that sensitive individuals will enjoy unpleasant representations. While Mendelssohn took issue with Du Bos' striking starting point, on certain fundamental matters the two were in agreement. John H. Zammito writes that, "Mendelssohn helped bring the sensationalist and naturalistic viewpoint of Du Bos, Batteux, and the French Enlightenment … into fashion in Germany."[56]

Du Bos had a considerable impact on philosophy of art in Britain. His influence is found in the *Three Treatises* by James Harris,[57] particularly the second of the treatises, "A Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry." Like Du Bos, Harris distinguishes between the arts on the basis of their means of expression. For both writers, painting uses natural signs and poetry artificial ones. They agree that this gives painting an advantage. They agree that certain subjects lend themselves to being represented by painting and others to representation by poetry. They agree that poetry is suited to the representation of a series of events through time. (Harris adds that certain matters are best represented by music.) They agree that the power of poetry can be enhanced by music. They

54 Moses Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: 1997), 71.

55 Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, 136–137.

56 John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's* Critique of Judgment (Chicago: 1992), 24.

57 James Harris, *Three Treatises: The First Concerning Art; The Second Concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry; The Third Concerning Happiness* (London: 1744).

agree that the value of art lies in the arousing of sentiments. In short, Harris' Second Treatise is a brief reprisal of key themes from the *Critical Reflections*.

Du Bos received a good deal of attention from Henry Home, Lord Kames. The first chapter of the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* is devoted to a consideration of Du Bos' explanation of why audiences will willingly experience representations of unpleasant subjects.[58] After saying that Du Bos' position has a certain plausibility, Kames ultimately rejects it. Du Bos' views on the influence of the natural environment on national character had a huge impact on another of Kames' books: *Sketches of the History of Man*.[59] Kames also discusses Du Bos in his *Elements of Criticism*. In this book, Kames adopts Du Bos' views on allegories. He goes so far as to use exactly examples the same as Du Bos provides.[60] Kames also adopts some of Du Bos' views on music.[61] The other major philosopher of art in mid-century Britain, Alexander Gerard, discusses Du Bos in several passages of *An Essay on Taste* (1759). Du Bos is never mentioned by name, but the *Critical Reflections* are cited several times, always approvingly. The author of the *Critical Reflections* is described as "an ingenious French critic."[62] Thomas Reid includes Du Bos among the "Writers of Taste and Judgement" who have written on art.[63] William Hayes, an important 18th-century English composer, mentions Du Bos approvingly several times in the course of an essay on musical expression.[64]

Gerard is most important, however, as the person who seems to have re-introduced Hume to Du Bos. In 1759, the Edinburgh Society awarded Gerard a gold medal for the best essay on taste. The essay honoured was an early version of *An Essay on Taste*. Hume was familiar with the early version and encouraged Gerard to publish the expanded version.[65] As we shall see, Du Bos was known to Hume as early as the 1730s, and had a significant impact on the *Treatise* and some early essays. Gerard's impact, and the contest to write an essay on taste, seems to have reminded Hume of Du Bos, and he wrote "Of the Standard of Taste," an essay in which the influence of Du Bos is readily apparent. Du Bos'

58 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh: 1751).

59 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh: 1774).

60 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 3 (London: 1762), 129.

61 *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 1, 4.

62 Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (London: 1759), 120.

63 Thomas Reid, *Thomas Reid on Logic, Rhetoric and the Fine Arts: Papers on the Culture of the Mind*, ed. Alexander Broadie (University Park, Pa: 2004), 286.

64 William Hayes, *Remarks on Mr. Avison's Essay on Musical Expression* (London: 1753).

65 Jones, *Hume's Sentiments* (see n. 2), 106.

influence continued into the next generation of Scottish philosophers, with Adam Smith adopting a number of doctrines defended in the *Critical Reflections*.[66]

One final aspect of Du Bos' influence remains to be considered. This is Du Bos' impact on philosophy of music. Du Bos says much less about music than he does about poetry and painting, but he makes a significant contribution to philosophy of music. He gives (1.45) a clear statement of what is now often called the resemblance theory of musical expression. The resemblance theory has been given detailed statements by two contemporary philosophers of music, Stephen Davies and Peter Kivy,[67] but it is already found in Du Bos. According to the resemblance theory, music does not express emotion. That is, it is not a medium for revealing some mental state of a musician. However, it is expressive of emotion. To say that music is expressive of emotion is to say that it resembles human expressive behaviour. Ample empirical evidence now shows that music is heard as resembling expressive behaviour. This expressive behaviour can be either verbal or non-verbal. Music can be heard, for example, as resembling the plodding gait of a sad person or as resembling the happy cries of a joyful one. A version of the resemblance theory is already found in the *Critical Reflections*.

The resemblance theory is crucial to explaining how music, like poetry and painting, can imitate nature. According to Du Bos, music resembles "natural signs of the passions." He goes further, however, than many advocates of the resemblance theory and holds that music can imitate more than human expressive behaviour. It can also imitate sounds in nature. Du Bos writes that, "There is truth in a symphony, composed to imitate a tempest, when the music of the symphony, its harmony and its rhythm, make us hear a noise similar to the tumult of the wind and the roaring waves, which clash with each other or break against the rocks." (323)

In addition to adopting a robust resemblance theory, Du Bos believes that music arouses ordinary emotions in listeners. In this respect, he is at odds with a philosopher such as Kivy, who always denied that music arouses anything except a kind of aesthetic emotion. An imitation of nature in the form of a painting or a poem arouses the same (albeit fainter) emotion as is aroused by the object imitated. Similarly, musical imitations of human expressive behav-

66 Peter Jones, "The Aesthetics of Adam Smith," in *Adam Smith Reviewed*, eds. Peter Jones and Andrew S. Skinner (Edinburgh: 1992), 56–78.

67 Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: 1994); Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* (Princeton: 1980). For a recent overview of the resemblance theory, see James O. Young, "Resemblance, Convention and Musical Expressiveness," *The Monist* 95 (2012), 587–605.

iour and objects in nature arouse fainter versions of the emotions that are aroused by the things represented by music.

Like many other 18th-century writers, Du Bos thinks of music as a way to enhance poetry's capacity to arouse emotions. Nevertheless, he is quite clear that purely instrumental music (he speaks of "symphonies" but he does not use that word in its modern sense) also resembles expressive behaviour and natural events. He writes that, when music is "purely instrumental, it still contains an accurate imitation of nature." (323)

In some cases, it is easy to trace Du Bos' influence on subsequent thinking about musical expression. Johann Georg Sulzer is frequently cited as an early exponent of the resemblance theory. Sulzer wrote that,

> The musician must pay the most scrupulous attention to a study of natural expression; speech invariably has something about it that melody can imitate, however much the two may differ. Joy is expressed in sonorous tones, unhurried tempi and in limited graduations of pitch and dynamics. Sadness unburdens itself slowly, from the depths of the heart, and is of sombre hue.[68]

Sulzer was well acquainted with Du Bos,[69] and it is reasonable to detect Du Bos behind this influential passage.

French writers adopted similar views. Batteux, for example, held that musical expression appropriates from natural forms of expression. Gestures and sounds, according to Batteux, are "natural means of expression" that are "especially suited to the expression of emotion." He adds that, "music is half-formed in the words that express some emotion. It takes only a little art to turn the words into music."[70] Later in the century, another French writer, André Morellet, adopted a similar view. On his view, the "expression of the passions by music" is founded on "the imitation of natural declamation."[71] There are, however, other sources of the resemblance theory, particularly in Germany. Moreover, other writers besides Du Bos may have found an inspiration for resemblance theory among ancient writers such as Cicero. Consequently, it is not

---

68 Johann Georg Sulzer, "Expression in music (*Ausdruck in der Musik*)," in *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Peter le Huray and James Day (Cambridge: 1981), 125.

69 Jennifer Tsien and Jacques Morizot, "18th Century French Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2013 Edition). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/aesthetics-18th-french/ (accessed 9 October 2020).

70 Batteux, *The Fine Arts*, 129, 133.

71 André Morellet, *De l'Expression en musique* (Paris: 1770), 15.

certain that Du Bos was the source of this theory in subsequent writers. Nevertheless, we can say with confidence that Du Bos contributed to the establishment of the broad 18th-century consensus in favour of resemblance theory and that he is likely to have influenced subsequent French writers. In defending the resemblance theory as early as 1719, Du Bos was certainly among the first 18th-century writers to do so. He deserves to be recognized as an early contributor to philosophy of music. His contribution is still worthy of further reflection since the questions he addresses are not resolved.

When one starts to look carefully at 18th-century philosophy (and not just 18th-century philosophy of art) one begins to see that Du Bos' influence was almost ubiquitous. And yet, by the end of the century, he was beginning to be forgotten. Two reasons can be given for Du Bos' eclipse. One is that some of his ideas became philosophical commonplaces. Chateaubriand expressed this view when he wrote that, "People robbed the Abbé Du Bos without admitting the theft … It would be more loyal to agree [with him]."[72] The second reason, it must be admitted, is that new and sophisticated views on aesthetics began to appear with Kant and other philosophers. Nevertheless, for at least a half century after the first publication of the *Critical Reflections* Du Bos influenced virtually every major writer on philosophy of art. Moreover, many of his ideas have continuing philosophical interest.

Before leaving the topic of Du Bos' influence, we will consider at greater length his impact on the thought of David Hume. The relationship between Du Bos and Hume has already been mentioned, but it deserves to be discussed in greater length. Hume was, indisputably, one of the great philosophers of the 18th or, indeed, any century. Given his importance, a careful examination of his thought in relation to Du Bos' is justified, particularly since it turns out that the *Critical Reflections* has a significant impact on Hume's writings.

5 Du Bos and Hume

5.1 *Introduction*

Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' influence on Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" and other essays is significant and well-documented.[73] However, while Du Bos' impact on

72 Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos*, i.

73 Jones, *Hume's Sentiments* (see n. 2). See also, Peter Jones, "Hume on Art, Criticism and Language: Debts and Premises," *Philosophical Studies* 33 (1978), 109–134; Peter Jones, "Hume on the Arts and 'The Standard of Taste,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, eds. David Fate Norton and Jacqueline Taylor, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: 2009), 414–446; and Roberto

Hume's essays has been recognized, the extent of his influence on the *Treatise* is not yet fully appreciated.[74] The preparation of our new translation of Du Bos' *Critical Reflections* makes it possible to confirm that Du Bos had a major impact on Hume's essays. More importantly, we can now identify many passages of the *Treatise* where Hume is indebted to Du Bos. We even have evidence that Du Bos had a significant impact on some of Hume's signature philosophical views.

Hume certainly owned the 1732 edition of the *Critical Reflections*.[75] Likely it was one of the first books that he acquired after his move to France. Moreover, we can be certain that Hume read at least some of Du Bos' book since he mentions passages from it in his "Early Memoranda" of 1729–1740.[76] As well, Du Bos is mentioned by name in Hume's "Of Tragedy." As already mentioned, his impact is also apparent in several essays, including, most importantly, "Of the Standard of Taste." What is less well known is that Du Bos' influence is already found in the *Treatise of Human Nature*.[77] Norton and Norton, in their magisterial critical edition of the *Treatise*, find some evidence of Du Bos' influence.[78] In general, however, this influence is neglected. A recent and excellent essay on Hume's intellectual development does no more than mention that Hume owned a copy of the *Critical Reflections* and that it had an impact on

---

Gilardi, "Hume, Addison e l'Abate Du Bos: Indagine Intorno a un Possibile Influsso dello 'Spectator' e delle *Réflexions Critiques* sulla Genesi di *A Treatise of Human Nature*," *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 69 (1997), 3–47.

74 But see James O. Young and Margaret Cameron, "Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* and Hume's *Treatise*," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 58 (2018), 119–130.

75 David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, *The David Hume Library* (Edinburgh: 1996), 88. Hume also owned three other books by Du Bos.

76 Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9 (1948), 500.

77 A recent and excellent essay on Hume's intellectual development does no more than mention that Hume owned a copy of the *Critical Reflections* and that its influence is found in "Of Tragedy" and "Of the Standard of Taste." See, M.A. Stewart, "Hume's Intellectual Development, 1711–1752," in *Impressions of Hume*, eds. Marina Frasca-Spada and Peter J.E. Kail (Oxford: 2005), 17–58.

78 One of the four passages identified by Norton and Norton is T 2.1.3.4; SBN 280: "in all nations and ages, the same objects still give rise to pride and humility." Perhaps Du Bos influenced this passage, but it is unlikely. Du Bos says nothing about pride and humility in the course of the *Critical Reflections*. More importantly, Du Bos says at various points that taste varies from nation to nation. Indeed, one of the themes running through the *Critical Reflections* is that there are important differences between nations and eras. Norton and Norton are right about the other three passages in which they detect Du Bos' influence. They are discussed below.

"Of Tragedy" and "Of the Standard of Taste."[79] It turns out, however, that even those, such as Norton and Norton, who are aware of Du Bos' impact on the *Treatise*, seriously underestimate the extent of this influence.

We first will consider a series of passages in the *Treatise* that so closely resemble passages from the *Critical Reflections* that Du Bos' influence on them is manifest. Next, we shall consider the extent to which Du Bos helped shape some of Hume's key doctrines and, in particular, his views on beauty and virtue.

5.2 *Poetry and Painting Arouse the Passions of Ordinary Life, but They Are Fainter*

Many passages in the *Treatise* that are concerned, even tangentially, with poetry or other fine arts bear signs of Du Bos' influence. Consider, for example, this passage:

> There is no passion of the human mind but what may arise from poetry; though at the same time the feelings of the passions are very different when excited by poetical fictions, from what they are when they are from belief and reality. A passion, which is disagreeable in real life, may afford the highest entertainment in a tragedy, or epic poem. In the latter case, it lies not with that weight upon us: It feels less firm and solid: And has no other than the agreeable effect of exciting the spirits, and rouzing the attention (T 1.3.10.10; SBN 630–631).[80]

Here Hume articulates two themes found in Du Bos: (1) poetry may arouse all of the emotions that are aroused in ordinary experience; (2) the emotions aroused by poetry are pleasing, even when they are emotions that are unpleasant in ordinary experience.

Once we know where to look, it is easy to identify the passages from the *Critical Reflections* that influenced Hume in this passage of the *Treatise*. Du Bos writes that,

---

79 Stewart, "Hume's Intellectual Development, 1711–1752," 17–58. Henning Jensen, "Comments on Peter Jones' 'Hume on Art, Criticism and Language: Debts and Premises'," *Philosophical Studies* 33 (1978), 135–140 is sceptical about the suggestion that Du Bos had an impact of the *Treatise*.

80 References are to Book, Part, Section and Paragraph numbers in the Norton and Norton edition of the *Treatise*, and to pages of Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge and Peter Harold Nidditch (eds.) *Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1978).

> Painters and poets excite these artificial passions in us by presenting imitations of objects capable of exciting *true* passions in us. That is, the impression that these imitations make on us is the same type of impressions that the object imitated by the painter or the poet would have made on us (106).

Du Bos, like Hume, believes that passions that in real life are displeasing can be pleasing when aroused by art:

> The passions which give people the most intense pleasures also cause the most painful and enduring suffering; but men still fear more the boredom that follows inaction and they find in the activities of life and in the intoxication of the passions an excitement that keeps them occupied (98).

Hume and Du Bos also agree that the emotions aroused by painting and poetry are less vivid than those in real life. Here is the passage where Hume says that the emotions aroused by poetry and painting are less vivid than those aroused by real objects:

> The raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly call'd *passions*, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible. But as in general the passions are more violent than the emotions arising from beauty and deformity, these impressions have been commonly distinguish'd from each other (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276).

This passage was foreshadowed earlier:

> We shall afterwards have occasion to remark both the resemblances and differences betwixt a poetical enthusiasm, and a serious conviction. In the mean time I cannot forbear observing, that the great difference in their feeling proceeds in some measure from reflection and *general rules*. We observe, that the vigour of conception, which fictions receive from poetry and eloquence, is a circumstance merely accidental, of which every idea is equally susceptible; and that such fictions are connected with nothing that is real. This observation makes us only lend ourselves, so to speak, to the fiction: But causes the idea to feel very different from the eternal establish'd persuasions founded on memory and custom. They are somewhat of the same kind: But the one is much inferior to the other, both in its causes and effects (T 1.3.10.11; SBN 631–632).

Here is the corresponding passage from the *Critical Reflections*:

> It [an imitation] ought to excite in our soul a passion that resembles what the object imitated would have been able to excite there. The copy of the object should, so to speak, excite in us a copy of the passion that the object would have excited there. But the impression that the imitation makes is not as deep as the impression that the object itself would have made, or as serious. This is because the impression an imitation makes does not affect reason; for reason finds no illusion in these experiences (106).

Notice that Hume and Du Bos agree about why the passions aroused by imitation are less vivid. Both hold that the mind is able to distinguish between the passion aroused by an object and a passion aroused by an imitation. Consequently, the imitation does not give rise to belief. Again, the positions of Hume and Du Bos are strikingly similar.

5.3 *Humans Desperately Require Relief from Ennui*

Early on in the *Critical* Reflections we find a passage that caught the attention of a number of writers in the 18th century. According to Du Bos, human life is plagued by ennui. This passage of the *Critical Reflections*:

> The soul has its needs as well as the body and one of the greatest human needs is to have the mind occupied. The ennui that soon follows inaction of the soul is a sickness so painful for people that they often undertake the most painful labours so that they are spared the pain of being tormented by ennui.
>
> It is easy to conceive how bodily exertions, even those that seem to demand the least application, cannot fail to occupy the mind. Apart from these opportunities [for bodily exertion], the soul can only be occupied in two ways: either the soul submits to the impressions that external objects make on it, and we call this sensation; or it supports itself by speculation on certain matters, some useful, some intriguing, and we call this reflection or meditation (96).

Almost anything is preferable, Du Bos believes, to ennui. He explains why we are willing to undergo the pains of viewing a tragedy, saying that these pains are preferable to our prevailing ennui.[81] We also turn to gambling to escape this unpleasant state of mind:

---

81 For a discussion of this point, see Paisley Livingston, "Du Bos' Paradox," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53 (2013), 393–406.

> games of chance … keep the soul in a kind of ecstasy and keep it there without the soul needing to contribute to its pleasure by paying serious attention, which our natural laziness always seeks to avoid. Laziness is a vice that people can sometimes overcome, but it can never be suppressed (105).

The similarities between these passages from Du Bos and certain passages in the *Treatise* are so striking that these cannot be coincidental. Consider for example the passage in which Hume writes that,

> Those, who take a pleasure in declaiming against human nature, have observ'd, that man is altogether insufficient to support himself; and that when you loosen all the holds, which he has of external objects, he immediately drops down into the deepest melancholy and despair. From this, say they, proceeds that continual search after amusement in gaming, in hunting, in business; by which we endeavour to forget ourselves, and excite our spirits from the languid state, into which they fall, when not sustain'd by some brisk and lively emotion. To this method of thinking I so far agree, that I own the mind to be insufficient, of itself, to its own entertainment, and that it naturally seeks after foreign objects, which may produce a lively sensation, and agitate the spirits (T 2.2.4.4; SBN 352–353).

Hume has someone in mind when he speaks of those who take a pleasure in declaiming against human nature. This can only be Du Bos.

Hume and Du Bos even use the same examples to illustrate the view that the soul requires constant occupation. Consider this passage from the *Treatise*:

> If we want another parallel to these affections, we may consider the passion of gaming, which affords a pleasure from the same principles as hunting and philosophy. It has been remarked, that the pleasure of gaming arises not from interest alone; since many leave a sure gain for this entertainment: Neither is it derived from the game alone; since the same persons have no satisfaction, when they play for nothing: But proceeds from both these causes united, though separately they have no effect …
>
> The interest, which we have in any game, engages our attention, without which we can have no enjoyment, either in that or in any other action. Our attention being once engaged, the difficulty, variety, and sudden reverses of fortune, still farther interest us; and it is from that concern our satisfaction arises. Human life is so tiresome a scene, and men gener-

> ally are of such indolent dispositions, that whatever amuses them, though by a passion mixt with pain, does in the main give them a sensible pleasure (T 2.3.10.9–10; SBN 452).

One may well wonder who remarked that the pleasure of gaming does not arise from interest alone. He can only have been Du Bos. The first of the two paragraphs just quoted comes from this passage of the *Critical Reflections*:

> many people are ruined by gambling, not out of avarice, but by the attractions of gaming. In fact, a habitual gambler who is gifted with the ability to calculate an infinity of odds and properly draw the correct consequences can have certain winnings every day and not risk his money in games where success depends more on the ability of the players than on the luck of cards and dice. However, he prefers games where winning entirely depends on the caprice of the dice and cards and in which his ability does not give him superiority over the other players (104).

The second of the paragraphs just quoted from Hume is a summary of some of the doctrines stated in the first two chapters of the *Critical Reflections*. The idea that human life is tiresome is Du Bos' starting point. The idea that we are willing to accept pain as an alternative to the ennui of daily life is also straight out of Du Bos.

5.4 *Du Bos and Hume on Painting and Poetry*

In many passages where Hume says anything about poetry or painting, the influence of Du Bos is apparent. Consider, for example, a passage in which Hume speaks of the consistency of tone that we expect in poetry and painting. He adopts precisely the view that Du Bos articulates in the *Critical Reflections*.

In the passage to which we refer, Hume speaks of comparisons that give rise to envy and then he remarks that rules of art and criticism require consistency of tone in a treatise. A treatise ought not to have one part "serious and profound" and another part "light and humorous." However, Hume goes on to observe that,

> this makes us not blame Mr. *Prior* for joining his *Alma* and his *Solomon* in the same volume; tho' that admirable poet has succeeded perfectly well in the gaiety of the one, as well as in the melancholy of the other. Even supposing the reader shou'd peruse these two compositions without any interval, he wou'd feel little or no difficulty in the change of passions: Why, but because he considers these performances as entirely different, and by

> this break in the ideas, breaks the progress of the affections, and hinders the one from influencing or contradicting the other? (T 2.2.8.18; SBN 379–380)

The case of painting is completely different. There we are troubled by inconsistency:

> An heroic and burlesque design, united in one picture, wou'd be monstrous; tho' we place two pictures of so opposite a character in the same chamber, and even close by each other, without any scruple or difficulty (T 2.2.8.19; SBN 380).

Here Hume apparently adopts a position that Du Bos has defended in the *Critical Reflections*. Problems in the composition of a poem are, Du Bos holds, jarring: "We can see without difficulty a painting's relational defects when we simultaneously perceive objects that do not stand in the proper relations" (236). In contrast, similar defects in a poem do not trouble us because it takes time to view a drama or read an epic. "Consequently, defects in the arrangement or organization of these poems do not jump out at us in the way that similar defects in a picture do" (236). It is unlikely that Hume, who knew next to nothing about art criticism, would venture to make a judgement of the sort he does without relying on some authority. Given the similarity between the position Hume adopts and Du Bos' position, that authority can only have been Du Bos.

The next passage to be considered concerns the way in which poets give their works verisimilitude or, as Du Bos says, *vraisemblance*. In one passage, Hume discusses how the frequent repetition of ideas inclines us to certain beliefs. He then adds that:

> In like manner tragedians always borrow their fable, or at least the names of their principal actors, from some known passage in history; and that not in order to deceive the spectators; for they will frankly confess, that truth is not in any circumstance inviolably observed; but in order to procure a more easy reception into the imagination for those extraordinary events, which they represent (T 1.3.10.6; SBN 121–122).

In the next paragraph, Hume continues in the same vein:

> This mixture of truth and falsehood in the fables of tragic poets not only serves our present purpose, by shewing, that the imagination can be sat-

> isfy'd without any absolute belief or assurance; but may in another view be regarded as a very strong confirmation of this system. 'Tis evident, that poets make use of this artifice of borrowing the names of their persons, and the chief events of their poems, from history, in order to procure a more easy reception for the whole, and cause it to make a deeper impression on the fancy and affections. The several incidents of the piece acquire a kind of relation by being united into one poem or representation; and if any of these incidents be an object of belief, it bestows a force and vivacity on the others, which are related to it (T 1.3.10.7; SBN 122).

Norton and Norton identify Aristotle and Dryden as possible influences on this passage.[82] However, when we look at this passage beside a passage from Du Bos, this claim becomes implausible. The close resemblance between what Du Bos and Hume say makes clear that Hume had Du Bos in mind. Here is a comparable passage from Du Bos:

> I believe that a tragic poet compromises his art when he sins too greatly against history, chronology, and geography in advancing facts that are contradicted by these sciences. When what he says contradicts what is widely known, his error harms his work more (218).

Du Bos spends a whole chapter developing this point. Again, especially given that we know that Hume had recently read Du Bos, he is the obvious source for this passage.

We will mention one more passage in which Hume mentions poetry in terms highly reminiscent of Du Bos. In this passage, Hume mentions the tendency of artists to decline into insanity. He writes that a "lively imagination very often degenerates into madness or folly" (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123). Hume could certainly have come across this idea in a number of sources. The suggestion that artists are inclined to madness is not unusual and can be traced to antiquity and to the works Plato and Aristotle. Hume certainly, however, came across it in the *Critical Reflections*. There we find Du Bos writing that,

> It is well known that they are embraced by a sort of enthusiasm which produces their ideas. Aristotle even speaks of a poet who never composed

82 Norton and Norton, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 751.

> better than when his poetic fervour amounted almost to a frenzy. Tasso only gave birth to those admirable pictures of Arminda and Clorinda at the cost of a disposition to real insanity, into which he fell towards the end of his life. Apollo has his drunkenness as well as Bacchus. Do you believe, asked Cicero, that Pacuvius composed in cold blood? That could not be (360).

Again, under the circumstances, it is reasonable to conclude that Du Bos influenced Hume's view that artists tend to madness.

5.5 *Hume and Du Bos on National Characters*

Although in the *Treatise* Hume adopted Du Bos' views on a number of points, he also explicitly rejected Du Bos' views on occasion. In particular, the views of Hume and Du Bos are diametrically opposed on the question of the origin of national characters.

Consider a passage in which Hume discusses the sympathy that humans have for each other. He attributes this sympathy to "the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation." He then goes on to say that, "'tis much more probable, that this resemblance arises from sympathy than from any influence of the soil and climate" (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 316–317). Norton and Norton identify a number of writers that Hume has in mind here, including Isaac Barrow. They do not mention Du Bos but he is the obvious source of the view that Hume rejects. Du Bos devotes nine chapters of Book Two (2.12–20) of the *Critical Reflections* to a discussion of how factors such as soil, climate, and food affect national characters. Given that Du Bos discusses the impact of soil and climate so extensively, and Hume had apparently read Du Bos so recently, we need not look any further for the writer Hume had in mind here. Hume returned to this question in his essay "Of National Characters:"

> Different reasons are assigned for these *national characters*; while some account for them from *moral*, others from *physical* causes. By *moral* causes, I mean all circumstances, which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us. Of this kind are, the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours, and such like circumstances. By *physical* causes I mean those qualities of the air and climate, which are supposed to work insensibly on the temper, by altering the tone and habit of the body, and giving a particular complexion, which,

> though reflection and reason may sometimes overcome it, will yet prevail among the generality of mankind, and have an influence on their manners (ONC 2).

This distinction between moral (that is, social) and physical causes is taken straight out of the *Critical Reflections* (2.13). Here too, however, Hume rejects Du Bos' belief that physical causes are paramount: "As to *physical causes*, I am inclined to doubt altogether of their operation in this particular; nor do I think, that men owe any thing of their temper or genius to the air, food, or climate" (ONC 7).

5.6 *Du Bos and Hume's Core Philosophical Commitments*

So far, it must be admitted, Du Bos' influence on Hume is manifest. The *Critical Reflections* made a huge impression on the young Scotsman, but it is not clear that the *Critical Reflections* had a major impact on Hume's core philosophical beliefs. Demonstrating that Du Bos had an impact on Hume's core philosophical beliefs is more difficult than demonstrating that he influenced particular passages in the *Treatise*. Nevertheless, certain passages indicate that the *Critical Reflections* helped shaped Hume's thinking in important ways. Du Bos certainly influenced Hume's views on beauty and criticism. Moreover, Du Bos seems to have had an impact on Hume's signature view that morality is a matter of sentiment. Hume's views on virtue may have been an extension of Du Bos' views on beauty from the aesthetic realm to the moral realm. Du Bos may also have had an impact on Hume's philosophical starting point, the distinction between ideas and impressions. Let us first consider this distinction.

The *Treatise* begins with a distinction between ideas and impressions. Impressions are lively, vivid perceptions, while ideas are fainter, less lively perceptions. They are copies of impressions. This distinction is not found in earlier empiricists, such as John Locke and George Berkeley. It is, however, perhaps foreshadowed in a passage from the *Critical Reflections*. When Du Bos' describes sentiments, he calls them "The first ideas born in the soul, when it receives a lively stimulus" (1.33). It is, perhaps, not fanciful to see an echo of this passage in the very first paragraph of the *Treatise*. There, Hume refers to "Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul" (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1). Hume's impressions, like Du Bos' sentiments, are the first perceptions to make an appearance in the soul. Hume's impressions and Du Bos' are both described as 'lively.' Arguably, Du Bos' influence is found as early as the first paragraph of the *Treatise*.

Turn now to a consideration of the suggestion that Hume adopted Du Bos' views on aesthetic properties such as beauty. Consider, for example, this passage from the *Treatise*:

> If we consider all the hypotheses … to explain the difference betwixt beauty and deformity, we shall find that all of them resolve into this, that beauty is such an order and construction of parts, … [and] is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul. This is the distinguishing character of beauty, and forms all the difference betwixt it and deformity, whose natural tendency is to produce uneasiness. Pleasure and pain, therefore, are not only necessary attendants of beauty and deformity, but constitute their very essence (T 2.1.8.2; SBN 299).

A related passage is found in "Of the Standard of Taste:"

> no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty (ST 8).

Hume anticipated this position in his early essay, "The Sceptic," where he wrote that, "beauty, properly speaking, lies not in the poem, but in the sentiment or taste of the reader" (S 7). In other words, beauty, like virtue and vice, is a response-dependent property. That is, a poem is beautiful because we experience certain sentiments of approbation when we experience it.

We suggest that Hume acquired from Du Bos the idea that the criticism of poetry, painting, and other arts is a matter of sentiment. That is, our sentiments inform us that a work is beautiful. This much has been apparent since the work of Jones, but Du Bos' influence is already found in the *Treatise*. The subjectivist picture of beauty that we find there originates in Du Bos. Du Bos introduced talk of sentiments into philosophy of art and made our subjective responses the criterion of goodness in poetry and painting. Here are some typical passages from Du Bos: according to Du Bos, the questions "Does the work please, or not?" and "Is the work, on the whole, good or bad?" amount to the same question. He adds that, "For us, the greatest painter is the one whose works give us the greatest pleasure" (344). Later he adds that, "poems and paintings are only good works to the degree that they move us and engage us" (518). Other writers were, by the time Hume wrote the *Treatise*, already adopting Du Bos' views

on aesthetics. It seems likely, however, that Hume was directly influenced by Du Bos, particularly since we know that Hume had so recently read the *Critical Reflections* when he wrote the *Treatise*.

It is also plausible to find Du Bos' influence in what Hume says about morality. We suggest that Hume's views on virtue are an extension of Du Bos' views on beauty to the moral realm. In a famous passage from the *Treatise* Hume writes that,

> when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: And this discovery in morals, like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences; tho', like that too, it has little or no influence on practice. Nothing can be more real, or concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness; and if these be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice, no more can be requisite to the regulation of our conduct and behaviour (T 3.1.1.26; SBN 469).

In making morality a matter of sentiment, virtue becomes a response-dependent property: something is virtuous because it inspires certain sentiments.

It is plausible to see Hume as extending to morality the view that Du Bos had adopted with regard to beauty. Just as Hume makes virtue a response-dependent property, Du Bos makes beauty a response-dependent property. The sentiments that Hume holds we have in response to actions and characters are sentiments of pleasure or uneasiness (displeasure). The sentiments that Du Bos says that we have in response to works of art are sentiments of pleasure or displeasure. Hume says that we have a moral sense that enables us to have these sentiments. Du Bos says that we have a sense of beauty that enables us to have the sentiments of which we are speaking. The parallels are striking.

Let us consider another passage that suggests that Du Bos shaped Hume's thinking on morality. The passage in question is found in the Introduction to the *Treatise*. There Hume writes that,

> The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: and politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other (T Introduction 5; SBN 15).

In the same connection, consider also this passage: "'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103).

Focus for a moment on the claim that morals and criticism are matters of sentiment. The suggestion that criticism is a matter of taste and sentiment is now a commonplace. However, such an account of criticism was not widespread prior to Du Bos and, indeed, he was responsible for the spread of this doctrine in the early 18th century. His single most important contribution to philosophy of art is the view that artworks arouse emotions, or as he calls them, sentiments, in audience members. Even Hume's choice of Du Bos' word 'sentiment' in this context suggests that Du Bos has influenced Hume.

The use of the word 'taste' is also telling. At one point, Hume even speaks of a 'moral taste':

> The approbation of moral qualities most certainly is not deriv'd from reason, or any comparison of ideas; but proceeds entirely from a moral taste, and from certain sentiments of pleasure or disgust, which arise upon the contemplation and view of particular qualities or characters (T 3.3.1.15; SBN 581).

The use of the word 'taste' in this context is unusual, but it is common in discussions of beauty, including such discussions in Du Bos. Approval of some moral properties is a result of our having sentiments of pleasure, just as we have, according to Du Bos, sentiments of pleasure in response to poetry and painting. We suggest that this is more evidence that Hume is extending Du Bos' account of beauty to moral qualities.

In another passage Hume groups judgements about virtue and judgements about beauty. In this passage he writes that,

> We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous. The case is the same as in our judgements concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. Our approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure they convey to us (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 471).

The view that judgements about beauty are judgements about the pleasure that artworks convey to us is Du Bos'. Hume has simply extended this view to judgements about virtue.

A final passage needs to be mentioned in defence of the hypothesis that Hume's view of virtue is an extension of Du Bos' views on beauty. Hume writes that,

> In what sense we can talk either of a *right* or a *wrong* taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty, shall be consider'd afterwards. In the mean time, it may be observ'd, that there is such a uniformity in the *general* sentiments of mankind, as to render such questions of but small importance (T n. 80; SBN 547).

This passage is noteworthy for two reasons. For a start, it is another in which morals and beauty are classified together. Just as importantly, in this passage Hume espouses the view that the sentiments of humanity are very much alike in these matters. This was also the view of Du Bos.

According to Hume, we are able to have the sentiments that give rise to response-dependent properties because we have a moral sense. He tells us that, "Morality … is more properly felt than judged of" (T 3.1.2.1; SBN 470). This view is also akin to a view adopted by Du Bos. Du Bos also believed that we have a moral sense. He wrote, for example, that we have a "natural emotion that is automatically aroused in us when we see our fellows in danger or misfortune" (99). Du Bos' views on a moral sense, as well as his views on a sense of beauty, likely had an impact on Hume.

Du Bos was not the only influence on Hume's views of morality and criticism. Several authorities hold that Francis Hutcheson had an impact on views where we detect the influence of Du Bos.[83] Others are more sceptical about the claim that Hutcheson had an impact on Hume.[84] Here we do not take a stand on this debate. Our view is perfectly consistent with the view that Hutcheson also influenced Hume. Whatever the relationship between Hutcheson and Hume, the relationship between Du Bos and Hume has been neglected and is readily apparent from a comparison of the *Treatise* and the *Critical Reflections*.

Du Bos certainly had an impact on the *Treatise* greater than has been previously recognized. Many more passages can now be identified as bearing marks of Du Bos' influence than anyone had previously suspected. Given that the influence of Du Bos on particular passages is so palpable, it seems likely that certain of Hume's core doctrines, and in particular his view that criticism and

83 David Fate Norton, "Hume and Hutcheson: The Question of Influence," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 2 (2005), 211–256.

84 James Moore, "Hume and Hutcheson," in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, eds. M.A. Stewart and John P. Wright (Edinburgh: 1994), 23–57; Luigi Turco, "Hutcheson and Hume in a Recent Polemic," in *New Essays on David Hume*, eds. Emilio Mazza and Emanuele Ronchetti (Milan: 2007), 171–198.

morality are matters of sentiment, were influenced by Du Bos' *Critical Reflections*. His distinction between ideas and impressions may also have been influenced by Du Bos.

We cannot, perhaps, say with absolute certainty that Du Bos influenced Hume's view that moral and aesthetic properties are response-dependent. There are other plausible sources of Hume's view including, as Hume himself notes at a number of places, the primary/secondary quality distinction. Nevertheless, it is plausible to see the *Critical Reflections* as one of the sources of Hume's views on moral and aesthetic properties and his views on the existence of a moral sense. Unexpectedly, perhaps, a work devoted to philosophy of art seems to have had a significant impact on one of the most important works of Western philosophy. Even if this influence is recognized, it must be admitted that Hume developed his views on morality with a philosophical sophistication and insight that is incomparably greater than anything found in Du Bos. Our claim is merely that the *Critical Reflections* had a significant impact on the *Treatise*.

5.7 *Du Bos and Hume's Essays*

Let us leave the *Treatise* and turn to an examination of Du Bos' impact on Hume's essays. There is no doubt that Hume had Du Bos in mind when writing "Of Tragedy" since Du Bos is mentioned by name. However, few students of Hume have looked at the relevant passage from "Of Tragedy" in conjunction with the corresponding passage from the *Critical Reflections*. When the passages are seen side by side, it is clear just how indebted Hume is to Du Bos.

Here is the paragraph where Du Bos is mentioned by name:

> L'Abbe DU BOS, in his reflections on poetry and painting, asserts, that nothing is in general so disagreeable to the mind as the languid, listless state of indolence, into which it falls upon the removal of all passion and occupation. To get rid of this painful situation, it seeks every amusement and pursuit; business, gaming, shews, executions; whatever will rouze the passions, and take its attention from itself. No matter what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose (OT 3).

Here Hume refers to *Critical Reflections* 1.1. That Du Bos influenced the next paragraph of "Of Tragedy" is not so apparent since Du Bos is not mentioned.

Here is the next paragraph of "Of Tragedy:"

> It is impossible not to admit this account, as being, at least in part, satisfactory. You may observe, when there are several tables of gaming, that all the company run to those, where the deepest play is, even though they find not there the best players. The view, or, at least, imagination of high passions, arising from great loss or gain, affects the spectator by sympathy, gives him some touches of the same passions, and serves him for a momentary entertainment. It makes the time pass the easier with him, and is some relief to that oppression, under which men commonly labour, when left entirely to their own thoughts and meditations (OT 3).

In this passage, Hume acknowledges that Du Bos is at least partly right about the enjoyment of tragedy. He then paraphrases this passage from the *Critical Reflections*:

> When we are in one of those rooms where several players are seated around different tables, what secret instinct makes us take a place among the players who risk the highest stakes, even though their play is not as worthy of our curiosity as that at some other tables? What attraction brings us back to them after a feeling of curiosity has made us check what sort of luck is to be had at the neighbouring tables? The emotions of the other players move us; those who play for the highest stakes move us most because they are most moved themselves.

Eighteenth-century citation standards differ from our own, but modern undergraduates would be charged with plagiarism if they paraphrased another author as closely as Hume does without acknowledging their debt.

Consider briefly Hume's essay, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences". Jones finds a great deal of overlap between this essay and the *Critical Reflections*.[85] We are not so certain. For example, Hume's first conclusion (that the arts and sciences initially flourish under a free government and not a monarchy) is antithetical to many of Du Bos' views. He believes, for example, that the arts flourished under the absolute monarchies of Augustus and Louis XIV. Moreover, according Du Bos, social factors are not crucial when it comes to the flourishing of the arts. Rather, he believes, environmental and climatic factors are most important.

Nevertheless, two passages from "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" are redolent of Du Bos. The first is this: "'No man,' said the prince of

85 Jones, *Hume's Sentiments*, 101.

CONDE, 'is a hero to his *Valet de Chambre*'" (RPAS 18). Potentially, Hume could have come across this aphorism in any number of places. Certainly, however, he came across it in the *Critical Reflections* (172). Even more strikingly, we find this passage:

> The FRENCH are convinced, that their theatre has become somewhat effeminate, by too much love and gallantry; and begin to approve of the more masculine taste of some neighbouring nations (RPAS 20).

Du Bos discusses this point at some length in 1.18, "Our neighbours say that our poets put too much love in their tragedies." There Du Bos endorses the view of an English poet (who turns out to be Joseph Addison) that the French put too much love in their tragedies. Du Bos contrasts the French stage with the manly tragedies of the ancients. This is worth noting, if only to provide further proof that the *Critical Reflections* apparently made a huge impression on the young Hume.

Du Bos' influence on "Of the Standard of Taste" has already been well established by Jones. Here we can do little but confirm that Jones is right about this influence, identify some points of influence that he neglected to mention, and to identify ways in which Hume parts company with Du Bos. The points of contact between Hume's essay and the *Critical Reflections* are almost too numerous to list.

Du Bos' major innovation was to argue that we sense that a painting or poem is beautiful. Of course, Hume and he agree on this point. They also agree that we have an internal sense that enables us to be pleased by a work of art. According to Du Bos, "We have in us a sense intended to judge the value of works that imitate touching objects in nature." He calls it a "sixth sense" (519). Hume agrees, writing that, "Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease" (ST 12). Similarly, in "The Sceptic" Hume notes that, when it comes to both beauty and colours, "[t]here is a sufficient uniformity in the senses and feelings of mankind" (S Note F) for us to be able to talk about such matters.

Since they believe that we sense that a work of art is pleasing, Hume and Du Bos agree that we do not discover the value of art by means of reason. There is, however, an uncanny similarity in the way that they dismiss the suggestion that reason reveals the value of a painting or poem. Du Bos repeatedly mocks the suggestion that reason can reveal that a work of art is right. He often does so by saying that it is ridiculous that critics proceed in the manner of geometricians. For example, he writes that, "Our critics put these poems

and other works to a test that they have never faced. They analyse according to the geometrical method, a method suited to discovering flaws that have escaped earlier censors" (580). Elsewhere he writes that, "'geometrical' critics did not give our ancestors a distaste for Ronsard's poems and make them stop reading him" (626). (See also references to "geometrical" critics in 2.22 and 2.24.) Hume apparently adopts this trope from Du Bos when he writes that,

> To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable (ST 16).

Talk about "geometrical" judgements about aesthetic matters is rare and this makes the influence of Du Bos even more likely here. It is worth noting that in the early (1742) essay ("The Sceptic") Hume ridicules a "mathematician" who did not judge the *Aeneid* by means of sentiment (S 17).

Since both Du Bos and Hume are opposed to 'geometrical' criticism, it is no surprise that neither has much time for blind adherence to the rules of criticism. Both believe that there are rules which artists ought, in general, to follow, but these rules can be violated without a work being a failure. Here is what Hume has to say on this point:

> But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules (ST 11).

And here is Du Bos' formulation of this point: "Criticism may find no violations of the rules, but a work can be bad without violating the rules, as a work full of violations of the rules can be an excellent work" (518). Both Hume and Du Bos give Ariosto as an example of a successful artist who violates rules. This seems unlikely to be pure coincidence.

Hume and Du Bos agree that everyone is born with a sense of beauty (or taste). They also agree that this sense is more "delicate" (they both use this word) in some people than it is in others and they both agree that taste can be improved. Moreover, they agree that taste can be improved by practice. Hume writes that, "But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to encrease and

improve this talent, than *practice* in a particular art" (ST 18). Du Bos, in a similar passage, speaks of "natural taste perfected by comparison and experience" (2.26). Alexander Gerard, incidentally, was also influenced by Du Bos, whom he refers to as "an ingenious French critic" who noted the importance of "having had opportunity of studying many excellent performances."[86] Hume was familiar with Gerard's work prior to its publication and as early as 1756, the year before the publication of "Of the Standard of Taste." If Du Bos' influence was not direct, it could have come via Gerard. It seems likely, however, given all of the other points of contact, that the influence of Du Bos was direct.

Du Bos and Hume are both concerned about the threat that prejudice poses to sound critical judgement. According to Hume, the critic "must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination" (ST 21). He continues, saying that, "It is well known, that in all questions, submitted to the understanding, prejudice is destructive of sound judgment, and perverts all operations of the intellectual faculties: It is no less contrary to good taste; nor has it less influence to corrupt our sentiment of beauty" (ST 22). This prejudice may proceed from those who have "authority." Du Bos too is worried about prejudice and thinks that it will come from those who have authority in the artworld. "Until a work is generally known, the prejudice that judgement of professionals has spread in society counterbalances the sentiments of disinterested people of taste, especially if the work is by an author whose reputation is not well established." (545)

Hume and Du Bos agree, however, that prejudice will not prevail. In time, works of art will receive a just verdict. According to Hume, "though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment" (ST 27). Here again, Du Bos was ahead of him. It may take a while for prejudice to be overcome, but in time it will be. Du Bos writes that,

> Until a work is generally known, the prejudice that judgement of professionals has spread in society counterbalances the sentiments of disinterested people of taste, especially if the work is by an author whose reputation is not well established. If an author is already known to be an excellent artist, his work is very soon freed from any stigma. While prejudice struggles with another prejudice, the truth escapes, so to speak, from their hands. The truth will out (545).

86 Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: 1764), 111.

Du Bos and Hume both agree that the reputations of artists, once established, will not wane. On the other hand, the reputations of philosophers can be eclipsed. Here is Hume's statement of this point:

> But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is represented. Though in speculation, we may readily avow a certain criterion in science and deny it in sentiment, the matter is found in practice to be much more hard to ascertain in the former case than in the latter. Theories of abstract philosophy, systems of profound theology, have prevailed during one age: In a successive period, these have been universally exploded: Their absurdity has been detected: Other theories and systems have supplied their place, which again gave place to their successors: And nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science. The case is not the same with the beauties of eloquence and poetry. Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public applause, which they maintain for ever. ARISTOTLE, and PLATO, and EPICURUS, and DESCARTES, may successively yield to each other: But TERENCE and VIRGIL maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men. The abstract philosophy of CICERO has lost its credit: The vehemence of his oratory is still the object of our admiration (ST 26).

Here is Du Bos making almost exactly the same point:

> From the fact that school physics and the Ptolemaic system have been discredited, it does not follow that Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid* can be discredited. Opinions whose prevalence and duration is based on individual sentiment, that is, on the interior experience of those who have adopted these opinions in all eras, are not subject to being discredited (596).

Hume and Du Bos agree about why the reputations of artists will endure. When we are dealing with matters of sentiment (rather than reason) agreement is bound to be widespread since people are (with some variations as we shall see) essentially alike when it comes to their sixth sense.

Du Bos and Hume agree that, though there will be broad consensus about which works of art are valuable, some allowance must be made for divergence of individual taste. Hume writes that,

> A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images, than a man more advanced in years, who takes pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, Ovid may be the favourite author; Horace at forty; and perhaps Tacitus at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us. We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition. Mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection; whichever of these most predominates in our temper, it gives us a peculiar sympathy with the writer who resembles us (ST 29).

This is almost a paraphrase, with a change of examples, of this passage from the *Critical Reflections*:

> The man who as a child found more pleasure in reading Fontaine's *Fables* than Racine's tragedies now has a preference for those tragedies at age thirty. I say 'to prefer' and 'to better love,' and not 'to praise and blame,' since in preferring reading Racine's tragedies to Fontaine's fables, we do not blame and at the same time continue to love those fables. At the age of sixty, the man of whom I speak will prefer Molière's comedies, since they display the world that he has seen, and provide frequent occasion to reflect on what he has observed over the course of his life. He will no longer prefer Racine's tragedies, for which he once had such a taste when he was filled with the passions depicted in those plays (345).

It is impossible not to be struck by the similarity between these passages, which was noted by Jones.

Jones did not note that an echo of this passage is also found in the *Enquiries*. There Hume adopts Du Bos' view that the aim of the poet is to arouse sentiments or, as he says here, affections, in the reader: "It is the business of poetry to bring every affection near to us by lively imagery and representation." Hume then adds, having apparently forgotten the source of his inspiration that,

> When I was twenty, says a French poet, Ovid was my favourite: Now I am forty, I declare for Horace. We enter, to be sure, more readily into sentiments, which resemble those we feel every day (E SBN 221–222).

It was not a French poet, but it was a Frenchman who inspired this passage.

The other factor that will influence taste is, according to Hume, "the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (ST 28). The variation of taste from one country to another is a theme that runs throughout the *Critical Reflections*, as was noted above.

In a related point of agreement, Hume and Du Bos are both committed to the Test of Time when it comes to establishing the worth of artworks. Hume famously wrote that,

> The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours (ST 12).

Du Bos' position is essentially the same:

> The reputation of a poem is established by the pleasure that it gives to those who read it. It is established by means of sentiment. The opinion that a poem is excellent could only take root, or be extended, with the assistance of an internal certainty originating in the individual experience of those who receive it. Thus, the time that a poem has lasted is evidence that shows this opinion is based on the truth (597).

In this chapter, Du Bos even uses one of the examples used by Hume. He talks of "Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*" as works that have passed the test of time.

For all of the similarities between "Of the Standard of Taste" and certain passages in the *Critical Reflections*, in certain respects there are important differences between these two works. Hume is primarily concerned with finding, as the title of his essay suggests, a standard of taste. He is interested in finding such a standard because he is interested in resolving disputes. Famously, he beings his essay by remarking on the diversity of opinions that people have about works of art. Du Bos is not much interested in a standard of taste because he thinks that there will be widespread agreement about the values of artworks. If this agreement does not immediately emerge, it will soon so begin to do so. Consequently, Du Bos does not need to appeal to a standard of taste by which disputes can be resolved.

There is a second, and related, major difference between Hume's essay and the views of Du Bos. Hume believes that qualified critics are few and far

between: "though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty" (ST 23). Du Bos, in contrast, holds that, "the public is capable of making good judgements about verse and pictures without knowing the rules of poetry and painting" (522). The difference between Hume and Du Bos is not as great as may at first seem. Du Bos adds that, "I do not include uneducated people in the public that is capable of judging poems or paintings and determining the degree of their excellence. Here the word 'public' only refers to people who have acquired some education, either by reading or by intercourse with the world" (523). Nevertheless, there is a significant difference here. Since Hume believes that the number of qualified critics is small, there is a great scope for disagreement in critical judgements about artworks.

In at least one respect, Du Bos' has a more stable position when it comes to critical judgements. Hume begins by saying that taste differs dramatically from person to person. This is a little surprising if people are very much alike with respect to their sense of taste. It is also surprising if there will be consensus in the long term. That is, certain works and not others will pass the test of time. Du Bos holds that taste does not vary much from person to person within the broad educated public since everyone has the same sixth sense. Given this similarly of taste, we should not be surprised that certain works and not others pass the Test of Time. Once prejudices and other factors that cloud judgement are removed with the passage of time, agreement would be expected to be widespread.

Hume was influenced by Du Bos throughout most of his active philosophical years. Certainly Hume had read the *Critical Reflections* recently when he wrote the *Treatise*. Likely it was open in front of him as he wrote certain passages. Hume returned to the *Critical Reflections* during the 1750s when he, like many Scottish philosophers, became concerned with finding a standard of taste.

6 Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns

Since there are several, dependable historical studies of the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns,[87] we will focus attention here on those aspects that allow us to appreciate Du Bos' position on the various issues that were involved. Ostensibly, the Quarrel consisted of a series of debates that took place throughout Europe, including England, Italy, and France, about the relative merits of ancient and modern art. This characterization, however, needs to be supplemented by describing a number of other factors that fed into the debate, particularly insofar as it concerned Du Bos. These are: the interpretation and influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* on artistic culture in the 17th and 18th centuries, which led to the importance of adhering to *vraisemblance* in all the arts; the emergence of the controversial and competing geometrical method of art criticism; and the role of the 'marvellous' and the 'sublime' in both aesthetic experience and the evaluation of artistic merit.

In France, the Quarrel was first provoked in response to the performance of a new tragicomedy written by Pierre Corneille titled *El Cid*.[88] The play, which turned out to be as popular as it was controversial, debuted at the Théâtre du Marais in January 1636. Derived from the Spanish play *Las Mocedades del Cid*, it depicts the life of an 11th century Spanish warrior named Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, and in particular his on-again off-again love affair with the lower class Ximene. Disapproving of the potential union, Ximene's father challenges Rodrigo to a duel, which Rodrigo wins. Angry and vengeful over the death of her father, Ximene threatens Rodrigo but cannot bring herself to kill him. Having been called away to war, Rodrigo suddenly finds great success and fame on the battlefield, acquiring the sobriquet 'El Cid,' which is derived from the Arabic 'sayyid' meaning 'lord'. Upon his return, Rodrigo is once again challenged to a duel, this time by Don Sanche, who is acting on Ximene's behalf to avenge her father's death. Thinking Rodrigo has been killed by Don Sanche, Ximene realizes that she loves Rodrigo after all. Upon discovering he is alive, Ximene pledges her love to Rodrigo and the two plan to marry.

---

87 For a comprehensive bibliography, see Jennifer Tsien and Jacques Morizot, "18th Century French Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2013 Edition). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/aesthetics-18th-french/.

88 For an account of the Quarrel as it unfolded in England, see James Shelley, "18th Century British Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2014 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetics-18th-british/ (accessed 14 October 2020), and the bibliography he provides there.

The final act of the plot of *El Cid* caused a great upheaval, leading to a heated exchange of pamphlets (the usual means of writing artistic criticism at the time) between the great critics of the day. At issue was the lack of *vraisemblance* with regard to Ximene's decision to marry Rodrigo, since Rodrigo had killed her father in a duel. For most people, her decision simply defied credulity. Adhering to *vraisemblance*, which will be discussed in further detail below but which means, roughly, the likelihood or believability of the action depicted, was a guiding artistic rule at this time. *El Cid* was first criticized by the head of the Académie française, Cardinal Richelieu, and more complaints swiftly followed and multiplied. Dramatist and poet Georges Scudéry, for example, listed five problems with *El Cid*: the subject of the play is worthless; it violates core rules of dramatic poetry (i.e., *vraisemblance*); it proceeds without judgement; many of its passages are vicious; and if it has any aesthetic beauty, it is concealed from the audience.[89] To understand how the performance of this play motivated the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns in France, and to appreciate the importance of adhering to *vraisemblance*, let us first examine 17th-century attitudes toward the social function of dramatic poetry, which was at that time rooted firmly in the prevailing interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Although there had been a medieval tradition of reading and studying Aristotle's *Poetics*, the reception of this work from the 15th and 16th centuries was fundamentally different. Previously the work held attention for mainly philological reasons, but by the mid-15th century there was a strong literary interest in the *Poetics*.[90] According to Tarán and Gutas, in the 15th and 16th centuries, "the *Poetics*, then and also during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was the most influential work of literary criticism in Western Europe until the emergence of Romanticism." During this period in France, the new Latin version of the *Poetics* along with a French translation and commentary by André Dacier, which appeared in 1692, made the contents of the treatise widely known in literary France. However, not all interpretations of the *Poetics* were equally good, and views were often attributed to Aristotle that he himself did not hold.

In response to Plato's criticisms of tragedy and other art forms in *Republic* 10, Aristotle's *Poetics* introduces the idea that the artistic value of a tragedy (and, by implication, dramatic works more broadly) can be evaluated by means of the application of moral criteria. One of the most central criteria was whether the

89 Georges Scudéry, "Observations sur Le Cid," in *La Querelle du Cid: pièces et pamphlets publiés d'après les originaux* (Paris: 1898), 71.

90 On the history of the reception of Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Leonardo Tarán and Dimitri Gutas, *Aristotle* Poetics: *editio maior of the Greek text with historical introductions and philological commentaries* (Leiden: 2012).

work achieved *mimesis*, which was translated into French by the term '*vraisemblance*' and which we should translate as either 'natural' or 'probable.' In fact, the plot of a work, which must be a unity around which some subplots may be organized, is itself an imitation of action. According to Aristotle,

> It is evident … that the poet must be more the poet of his plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates. And if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet (*Poetics* 1451b27–29).

Aristotle does not mean that the action depicted in the plot has to be a literal or realistic representation of something, whether imagined or historical. Rather, a plot must be believable, natural, and probable. It should not, as it did to many in the audience of *El Cid*, make the audience question whether such a thing ever could or would occur.

Although *vraisemblance* was a key artistic rule to be strictly followed, authors and critics struggled to explain its precise meaning. Consider this explanation from the Abbé d'Aubignac[91] in his *Pratique du Théâtre* 1.2, where the term is described as much by what it is not as by what it is:

> This [i.e. *vraisemblance*] is the foundation of all theatrical works, which everyone talks about but no one understands. This is the general character which needs to be recognized in everything that happens. In a word, *vraisemblance* is, so to speak, the essence of the dramatic poem, and without which nothing can be reasonably said or done on stage. It is a general rule that the *true* is not the subject of the theatre, because there are many true things that should not be seen, and many that cannot be represented. This is why Synesius[92] correctly said that poetry and the other arts should be founded only in imitation, and need not follow truth but ordinary human opinions and sentiments. … The *possible* also should not be the subject, because there are many things that can be done, either by following natural causes or by the bounds of morality, which

91 François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac (1604–1676), French critic. This work was widely received and underwent multiple editions. *La Pratique du Théâtre* was considered to have codified the laws of dramatic composition.

92 Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 370–ca. 413), neo-Platonic philosopher and bishop.

> would be ridiculous and unbelievable if they were performed. … I will not dwell here on ordinary and extraordinary *vraisemblance*, which all professors have amply discussed. Everyone knows that things that are naturally impossible can become possible and *vraisemblable* by divine power or magic. They also know that theatrical *vraisemblance* does not require that only things that occur according to the common course of human life be represented. But it envelops in itself the *marvellous* (*merveilleux*), which makes events much more noble than unforeseen, even if they are always *vraisemblable*.

Thus, at this time, the *vraisemblable* was considered the essence of dramatic work. This did not mean that the artist must only depict true and historical events, but rather only those that conform to "ordinary human opinions and sentiments." Some things fail to be *vraisemblable* since they transgress moral or natural law. The *vraisemblable* extends beyond the common course of human lives to include what Abbé d' Aubignac and others, including Du Bos, called 'the marvellous,' which includes events and stories about divine and supernatural beings.

Du Bos is very comfortable with the term '*vraisemblance*' and uses it frequently in the context of describing works of painting, theatre, as well as music. As we have already quoted, but which is directly relevant again here, Du Bos explains,

> Painters and poets excite these artificial passions in us by presenting imitations of objects capable of exciting *true* passions in us. That is, the impression that these imitations make on us is the same type of impressions that the object imitated by the painter or the poet would have made on us (106).

There are, however, some differences with regard to how *vraisemblance* is achieved by the various arts according to Du Bos. In painting, *vraisemblance* comes in two types:

> There are two sorts of *vraisemblance* in painting: poetic and mechanical. Mechanical *vraisemblance* consists in not representing anything impossible, according to the laws of physics and the laws of optics. … Poetic *vraisemblance* consists in giving to characters passions that are appropriate to their age, their social class, the temperament they are given, and the interest that they are supposed to take in the events (226).

With regard to the former, Du Bos refers to what we may think of as plausibility, and provides examples of violations of *vraisemblance* along this dimension, such as depicting someone who appears to lift more than his body type could ever actually lift, or putting colour in places where light could never strike. According to Du Bos, simple adherence to the rules and lessons found in books about the art of painting should satisfy the rule of *vraisemblance*.

Poetic *vraisemblance* is characterized by Du Bos in terms of what Italians refer to as '*il costume*,' that is, to "make a painting consistent with what we know of the customs, habits, architecture, and arms of the people that one intends to represent" (226). In poetry, "we have nothing with which to reproach a poet if his invention does not offend *vraisemblance* and if the facts that he imagines could really have happened" (215). Poetry deals in spoken facts, which Du Bos defines as what "is possible in the circumstances in which it occurs," (215) and this excludes, thereby, what is impossible. The determination of what is possible or impossible is relative to the context of the theme and content of a poem. Accordingly, a poem depicting the events of Greek gods and goddesses may transgress the realm of what is possible for human beings, but not what is possible according to Greek theology.

In music and dramatic theatre, *vraisemblance* also plays a role with regard to establishing the bounds for imitation. Even without having had any experience of the events described in Greek theology, Du Bos claims that "we still find a sort of *vraisemblance* in the airs for the violin to which Lully has the entourage of the God of the Underworld dance in *Alceste* Act 4" (717). The case is similar with ancient Greek masks, which were traditionally worn by actors to exaggerate their profiles and the emotional or moral stance of the characters they were depicting:

> Ancient masks added a lot of *vraisemblance* to those excellent pieces in which the plot turns on an actor mistaking one person for another. The spectator, who erred in trying to distinguish between two actors whose masks were very similar, readily conceives that the actors themselves are confused. They easily enter into the supposition on which the events of the piece are based, while this supposition has so little *vraisemblance* for us that we have a lot of trouble accepting it (726).

The requirement that artistic imitation be *vraisemblable* was treated as a normative matter of social mores. Those who obeyed the artistic rule of abiding by *vraisemblance* at the same time achieved *bienséance*, which meant that what is depicted appeared to be decent, or proper, and this carried obvious moral overtones. Consider the advice of the Abbé d'Aubignac in his *La Pratique du*

Théâtre: "The stage does not show things as they are, but as they ought to be."[93] Transgressing this law was a violation of a social or moral code, since most critics and playwrights during the 16th and 17th centuries held that art should perform a didactic function. This lesson was also drawn from Aristotle's *Poetics*, and Du Bos clearly falls into this neo-Aristotelian camp of critics. Du Bos was not the most Aristotelian of the group, however, and throughout the *Critical Reflections* he can be seen to waffle on the question of the ultimate goal of art: should it be didactic, instilling moral and social values in the audience, or should it limit itself to providing pleasure? For Du Bos, pleasure seems to be the primary goal of art. He took this to be an empirical fact about human nature, and held that, in general, people prefer being moved to being instructed. For example, to explain why people prefer Virgil's *Aeneid* to Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, he writes that,

> People always prefer books that move them to books that teach them. Since their boredom is more pressing than their ignorance, they prefer the pleasure of being moved to the pleasure of being instructed (130).

Contrast Du Bos' view to that of a more rabid Aristotelian such as his near contemporary René Rapin[94] who, in his *Réflexions sur la poétique d'Aristote et sur les ouvrages des poétes anciens et modernes* [Reflections on the Aristotle's poetic and on the works of ancient and modern poets] (1674) wrote in the 'Advertisement' and as the first words of the work:

> Since it is not so much to instruct as to exercise the wit (*ésprit*) that I make these *Reflections* public, I am not so vain as to take them to be necessary nor so humble to believe them to be altogether useless. This work is not a new model of poetry, because that of Aristotle is the only one that should be followed as the most precise rule for cultivating wit. In effect, his *Poetics* is nothing other, so to speak, than nature reduced to method and good sense reduced into principles. One cannot arrive at perfection except by these rules, and those who do not follow them fall astray. How many errors have the majority of Spanish and Italian poets made by having ignored them? And when these rules produce no pleasure, it is not the fault of the art but that of the artist. Everyone who has written on poetry has followed no idea other than Aristotle's.

93 François Hédelin, *La Practique du Théâtre* (Amsterdam: 1715), 207.
94 René Rapin (1621–1687), writer and critic.

There is no doubt that, according to Rapin, following Aristotle's rules was the *only* means to achieve artistic greatness, even for an artistic genius. Du Bos, on the other hand, was sometimes more lax about the rules, and thought that oftentimes artistic greatness is achieved precisely *because* the rules have not been followed. Although in general Du Bos recommends adherence to the rules of art (in fact, he devotes an entire chapter to this issue: "Of the significance of the offences painters and poets can commit against their rules" [1.32]), and he ties the ability to achieve *vraisemblance* to the fact that artists adhered closely to artistic rules, there are occasions where he makes exceptions. This is a consequence, again, of Du Bos' observation that people generally prefer to be moved by art, rather than to be instructed. He explains this point with reference to *El Cid*:

> ... the best poem is the one that engages us the most. It is the one that seduces us to the point of hiding most of its defects, and even making us voluntarily forget faults that we have seen and which have shocked us. A poem engages us in proportion to the charms of its poetic style. This is why people always prefer poems that touch them to poems that obey the rules. This is why we prefer *El Cid* to so many other tragedies. If we want to return to first principles, we must judge a poem by its poetic style rather than by its conformity to rules or the decency of its mores (246).

The popularity of *El Cid*, that controversial drama that sparked the debate over the merits of the Ancients versus the Moderns, is explained by Du Bos in terms of his general theory that artistic pleasure is the primary goal of art.

During this time, another style of criticism had emerged that was very popular among those who positioned themselves on the side of the Moderns in the Quarrel. It was advanced to replace all previous theories of art, including, and perhaps especially, Aristotle's. It was based on Descartes' philosophy, and particularly his *Discourse on the Method* (1637) and his work on geometry, of which the *Discourse* was intended to be an introduction. Descartes advocated a strictly rational, *a priori* epistemology, where the testimony of the senses was shown to be subject to radical doubt and thereby untrustworthy for philosophical and scientific discovery. The method he prescribed is intended to remove any possibility of doubt from one's investigations. To do so, Descartes subscribed to a set of rules, the first of which is this:

> The first was never to accept anything as true if I had not evident knowledge of its being so; that is, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice,

> and to embrace in my judgment only what presented itself to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I had no occasion to doubt it.[95]

The second, third, and fourth rules can be summarized as follows: divide difficulties to their smallest possible parts; start with things that are simplest and easiest to know and move to the more complex; and make exhaustive enumerations and reviews that omit nothing whatsoever. This ambitious method was picked up by many, and by the 17th century it was even being used in the evaluation of artistic merit. It was known as 'the geometrical method.'

How did art critics apply the geometrical method? Critics had distilled Descartes' philosophical lessons into a series of rules, which were then applied to the analysis of artistic works. One key rule was to set aside precedent—thus, to set aside artistic rules established by ancient masters, notably Aristotle—as irrelevant and untrustworthy. This is a central component in the overarching strategy of self-investigation. As Descartes explains:

> I entirely abandoned the study of letters, and resolved not to seek after any science but what might be found within myself or in the great book of the world. … But after spending some years thus in the study of the book of the world [by travel], and in trying to gain experience, there came a day when I resolved to make my studies within myself, and use all my powers of mind to choose the paths I must follow.[96]

Thus, the primary means of critical analysis, following the geometrical method, was to subject objects of study to intense, *a priori* analysis, not trusting any external authority for information. Devotees of the geometrical method included critics such as the Abbé Terrasson,[97] who began his *Critical Dissertation on Homer's Iliad* (*where, on the occasion of this poem we seek the rules of a poetic founded on reason, and on ancient and modern examples*) with the following characterization of philosophical or critical method:

> I mean by 'philosophy' a superiority of reason that makes us examine everything by its proper and natural principles, independently of the opinion that other men have had. … The proper and natural principle by which we should judge a work of *belles lettres* is not the ancient, steadfast

95 René Descartes, *Discourse on the method* 2, in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter T. Geach (Sunbury-on-Thames: 1954; rep. 1979), 20.

96 *Discourse* 1, 13–14.

97 Jean Terrasson (1670–1750), French priest and member of the Académie française.

> admiration that people have had for this work, but the real conformity that should exist between correct reason and *la belle nature*: this is philosophy.[98]

Proponents of this method, such as Perrault,[99] Fontenelle, de La Motte, and Terrasson, explicitly preferred Modern over Ancient artistic works, mathematics over experience and sensation. For example, as we saw above, Terrasson wrote that, "Any man who does not think about every literary subject as Descartes prescribed to think about physical matters is not worthy of the present century. Nothing better prepares one to judge works of the mind than mathematics" (*Preface*, liv).

Du Bos took a very dim view of the geometrical method, and commented slyly that "in France, there are fashions in science as well as in clothes" (578). Du Bos denies that modern writers and philosophers are smarter than the ancients, and so there is no good reason to privilege the former over the latter. He did concede, however, that there is a difference between the number of facts known by moderns; but, Du Bos adds, the Greeks and the Romans "would have made equally good use as we did of the important truths that chance has revealed to us if, so to speak, chance had been pleased to reveal these truths to them" (582). Du Bos speaks critically of the geometrical method on several occasions, and devotes an entire chapter to it: "That the way of argument is not as good for knowing the merit of poems and painting as sentiment" (2.23). It is not that the Cartesian approach to the study of art has its problems. It is that it is "always mistaken":

> [W]e are always mistaken in thinking philosophically, that is to say, in posing general principles, and drawing from those principles a chain of conclusions. There are a great many principles in the arts, and nothing is easier than to find oneself mistaken in the choice of which principle to

98 Jean Terrasson, *Critical Dissertation on Homer's Iliad* (London: 1716), Preface, iv.

99 The work of Charles Perrault (1628–1703), whose opera *Alceste* (1674), on which he collaborated with composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), prompted a wild response from audiences for its audacious break from following the widely accepted rules of classical theatre. Taking as its main characters the figures who were depicted in Euripides' ancient play of the same name, Perrault defended the superiority of his opera over the ancient play in his *Critique de l'Opéra* (1674). He followed this paean to Modern art with two subsequent volumes: *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand* [The Century of Louis the Great] (1687) and *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* [Parallel between the Ancients and the Moderns] (1688). Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) and Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672–1731), authors and members of the Académie française.

> put forward as most important. Might this principle not change according to the genre of work on which one wants to work? We might also give a principle a wider application than it should have. We often take something unprecedented to be impossible (526).

A priori reasoning will not help to identify factual, historical, or physical errors in painting and poetry, whether ancient or modern. Instead, it is only by means of experience that errors can be identified and scientific truth be discovered (2.23). Du Bos marshals a list of actual incidents in which a learned scholar was replaced by someone with first-hand experience. Seamen are more capable than mathematicians at navigating in open sea, military leaders are wiser than someone who has learned every fact about ancient and modern warfare. Older doctors, rather than newly trained experts, know from long experience how to apply remedies, and lawyers are better equipped than judges when speculating about the outcome of a lawsuit. Example upon example is put forward to emphasize the value of experience over mathematical and scientific reasoning. This is just as true for these arts and practices as it is for the evaluation of artistic works:

> Would the geometrical evaluation of Ariosto's merit made today by a Frenchman be good in comparison to the Italians in the sixteenth century? Would the rank that a French *critic* might today give Ariosto, by a geometrical analysis of his poem, be recognized as being what Ludovico deserves? What sheer number of calculations and combinations must someone make before he can draw a correct judgement? Following this method and appreciating a work by this method of examination, a large *folio* volume would scarcely be enough to contain the correct analysis of Racine's *Phaedra*. The discussion would be as subject to error as it would be exhausting to the writer and unpleasant for the reader. What the analysis could not find, sentiment discovers immediately (532).

The application of the geometrical method to the study of ancient works of art prompted yet another lively debate over the relative value of producing works in Latin or in French, and Du Bos was keenly aware of it. This was known as the 'Homer Quarrel.' It began when Anne Dacier produced a prose translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1711) and came to a head when Antoine Houdar de la Motte produced a so-called 'translation,' written in hexameter couplets. What started the debate? As it turned out, despite producing an entire so-called 'translation' of one of the greatest masterpieces of Greek antiquity, de la Motte did not know a lick of Greek. As cited before, the debate accelerated with the lengthy geomet-

rical critical analysis of the *Iliad* by Terrasson. These debates were in full swing during the time Du Bos was writing his *Critical Reflections*, and he had a great deal to say about the matter.

Du Bos concedes that there are "enormous flaws in Homer" (580). However, he does not see any reason why those flaws should get in the way of appreciating the artistic value of the work:

> From the fact that school physics and the Ptolemaic system have been discredited, it does not follow that Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid* can be discredited. Opinions whose prevalence and duration are based on individual sentiment, that is, on the interior experience of those who have adopted these opinions in all eras, are not subject to being discredited (596).

Du Bos' views on the relationship between a work of art in its original language and a translation of that work are striking: he does not think that a translation of, for example, Homer's *Iliad* is a copy of Homer's *Iliad*. In a discussion about why it is more pleasurable for some people to read a work in the original but not for others, Du Bos claims that we "need to reflect that those reading a translation of Horace's *Odes* in French are not reading the same poems as those reading the book in Latin" (612).

What about the relative merit of French over Latin and vice versa? In the *Critical Reflections*, it is clear that Du Bos is responding directly to a treatise by François Charpentier's *Excellence de la langue française* (1683),[100] in which Charpentier presents arguments that became the mainstay of the Moderns. The question was partly nationalist: is French more perfect than Latin? But it was also aesthetic: is French more beautiful than Latin? Charpentier weighed in on a controversial debate about the correct language for public inscriptions, which he thought should be French, and about whether Latin was a universal language in the Age of Augustus, which he thought it was not (*Discourse* 1). In the second *Discourse*, Charpentier pitted Latin authors against Greek authors in a game of "Who says it better?", and in the third *Discourse* he addresses the advantages and disadvantages of the languages themselves. It is clear that Du Bos is directly replying to this final part of Charpentier's treatise.

Charpentier, like other Cartesians, was a strong defender of the superiority of the French language. One point of focus was the way in which French words, which often end in vowels, produce a greater harmony and diversity of sound when elided than Latin does. Du Bos confronts these points directly

100 François Charpentier (1620–1702), French archaeologist and writer.

in a chapter dedicated to the topic. Taking the words used in poetry without regard to their meaning, but only to their sound, Du Bos argues that Latin has many advantages over French. Its brevity and inversion, he argues, makes Latin "better at creating images than French." He also contends that Latin is "more beautiful" than French, and accordingly "it is much easier to compose harmoniously in Latin than in French" (248). Du Bos also points out that the rules for writing Latin poetry are better, less cumbersome, and they add "more beauties into verses than do the rules of French poetry" (250). On this question, Du Bos is unequivocally taking the side of the Ancients.

In addition to the rivalry between Aristotelians and Cartesians, there was another, newly identified and variously understood aesthetic concept that threw proponents of both sides of the Quarrel into debate: this is the notion of the sublime.[101] Although there had been some references to the sublime in artistic circles in the 16th century, the notion took centre stage upon the publication of the French translation of Longinus' *On the Sublime* by Boileau (1674).[102] This classical work of literary criticism, originally written in Greek during the 1st century, was a study of the sublime: how some failed to achieve it, what it is, what are its sources, what is the relation between emotion and sublimity, as well as examples of sublime writers.

What is the sublime, according to Longinus?

> The true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled with joy and pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we heard. If, then, a man of sense, well-versed in literature, after hearing a passage several times finds that it does not affect him with a sense of sublimity, and does not leave behind in his mind more food for thought than the words at first suggest, but rather that on consideration it sinks into the pathetic, then it cannot really be the true sublime, if its effect does not outlast the moment of utterance.[103]

The sublime is thus tightly woven with our emotions, and it stirs and moves us with great joy and pride. It also endures: it leaves a mark on the listener or viewer. But it is easy to see how this very notion would trouble both the Aris-

101 There is considerable scholarly literature on the sublime in French culture. For example, Timothy J. Reiss, *The Meaning of Literature* (Ithaca: 1992).

102 Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711), important French poet and critic. As the fifteenth child of his father, Boileau usually called himself 'Despréaux' in order to distinguish himself from his many relatives. In this translation he is called Boileau. Longinus is often known as "pseudo-Longinus" simply because his identity is unknown.

103 Longinus, *On the Sublime* 1.

totelians and the Cartesians. The former, who were rule-bound and didactically inclined, valued the moral instruction of art above all else. It is not clear what lessons can be learned from experiencing the feeling of sublimity. Moreover, by valuing the sublime in art, what matters is the experience of the viewer or listener, not the moral standing of the artist or his artistic production. The latter, the Cartesians, who subjected artistic objects to intense, geometrical scrutiny, would have found it a challenge to capture the mathematical value of the sublime. In addition, there could be no geometrical formula that could analyse the audience's experience, which is interior and often inscrutable.

Du Bos speaks of the sublime on a number of occasions, and it is not always clear that he uses the term in the same way each time. It is notable, however, that the very notion of the sublime was undergoing a shift in meaning throughout the 18th century. Compare the following definitions from French dictionaries at that time. In *Le Dictionnarie de l'Académie Française* (1694), vol. 1, 'sublime' is defined as follows:

> SUBLIME, adjective of all types. High, noble. The only use is in moral concerns, or what has to do with the spirit/soul. *Is in a sublime degree. It is a man with sublime merit*.
>
> (SUBLIME, adj. de tout genre. Haut, relevé. Il n'y a d'usage que dans les choses morales ou qui regardent l'esprit. *Estre dans un degré sublime. C'est un homme d'un merite sublime*.)

Throughout the 18th century, a new usage of 'sublime' comes into effect, which more closely approximates contemporary use of the term. In the *Dictionnaire Critique de la Langue Française* (1787), volume 3:

> SUBLIME, adjective. .... It should not be said of people: we say, *a sublime thought, a sublime discussion*, but not *a sublime man, a sublime God*.
>
> (SUBLIME, adj. ... On ne le dit guère des persones: on dit, *une pensée sublime, un discours sublime*, mais non pas, *un homme, un Dieu sublime*.)

By the end of the century, 'sublime' is expressly not applied to people, and it loses its moral connotation.

Du Bos refers to the sublime most frequently when he is speaking of the work of artistic geniuses. In fact, he holds that only geniuses are able to find sublime inventions (1.26). "Hard work and experience," Du Bos writes, "cannot make someone produce more sublime ones" (391). Applying the term in order

to describe people, not objects, Du Bos alleges that painters and poets, whom he thinks arrive at the peak of their talents around age thirty, do not after that point become "more sublime" (410).

After having spoken of Du Bos' stance on issues concerning the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, let us now turn to his theory of genius.

7 Climate and Genius

Efforts to associate climate and natural human abilities are at least as old as Aristotle's case for natural slavery. For Aristotle, in short, the capacity in humans to engage in certain types of reasoning is a function of where they live. Some places are clearly better than others, and Aristotle deemed Athens, with its fertile, warm, stable environs, to be the best climate for creating a spirited and intelligent people.[104] The further one lives from the bountiful epicentre of Athens, the more likely one is to be enslaved by one's environment. Cold, harsh, incommodious conditions make it such that human beings are incapable of reaching their natural potential to be rational, ethical beings. In other words, one can be enslaved by the conditions of one's environment.

Like Aristotle, Du Bos subscribes to an environmental explanation of human development and ability. His concern, however, was narrower than Aristotle's: Du Bos is interested in climate differences in order to explain why geniuses exist. Specifically, he is concerned with geniuses who turn out to be painters and poets. This is a major topic of interest for Du Bos. In Book Two, nine chapters are specifically focussed on the topic of genius, and a further seven on climate.

Du Bos' primary question is this: what causes artistic genius? His answer: it is a matter of where you were born, raised, and live. Du Bos mentions that geniuses possess "divine enthusiasm" (355), but very rarely. Everywhere else, Du Bos is through-and-through a naturalist about the phenomenon of artistic genius, which finds it origins in the emanations of the earth and finds its way into the greatest artistic works of all time.

The naturalism of Du Bos' account of genius begins at birth, but not before. That is, on his theory, genius is a characteristic that depends not on one's parentage, but entirely on one's physical environment. This is a point repeatedly made in 2.3, in which Du Bos canvasses the gamut of ancient and early modern artists to trace whether or not their parentage played any role in the development of their artistic genius, and in every case the answer is negative.

104 Aristotle, *Politics* 7.7, 1327b18–31.

In sum, we can depict Du Bos' theory as follows:

> Emanations from earth → Air → Blood and soil
> → → → Biological characteristics + Effects of the sun

The biological characteristics of all organic things are directly dependent upon various properties found in human and animal blood, plant sap, and the soil in which things grow. The properties themselves are a consequence of the air in a given region, and can vary wildly even in closely proximate areas, such as over a border, or on the opposite side of one and the same mountain. The qualities of air are, in turn, a direct function of emanations from the earth, as well as the effects of the sun. Let us take each of these processes in turn.

Du Bos describes the earth as "a composite body in which fermentation is constantly taking place" (478). The constant fermentation produces emanations, which our senses are sufficiently sensitive to notice. For Du Bos, this theory is an inference to the best explanation:

> Emanations of the earth are the only apparent cause to which we can attribute the noticeable differences between the properties of air in various regions, equally distant from the equator. This opinion agrees very well with experience. Emanations, on which the properties of air depend, themselves depend on the nature of the body from which they escape. When the air in two countries varies, the composition of the earth is also found to vary (505).

These emanations are released into the atmosphere and partially cause climate variation.

In conjunction with these emanations, the sun also has an effect on the development of biological entities, and accordingly a nation's proximity to the equator has a deep effect on its climate. Indeed, Du Bos provides precise geographical measurements: the arts do not flourish north of 52° N or "closer than 25° to the equator" (430). This provides just over 25° of latitude of fortunate climate, and regions closer to the poles have almost no chance whatsoever of flourishing in art, since they will lack geniuses altogether.

Taken together, the combination of emanations from the earth and the intensity of sunshine generate climate. In particular, they cause alterations in the earth's air, and make it "subject to vicissitudes in temperature and humidity" (479). The air, in turn, has a direct impact on biological development due to its influence on blood and soil. According to Du Bos,

> The air that has so great an influence over our machines is a compound substance composed of elementary air plus the emanations that escape from all the bodies that it infuses or that its constant motion can detach. Scientists have also proved that air is full of an infinity of little animals and their seeds. This is enough to make it easy for us to conceive that air must be subject to an infinity of alterations that result from the mixture of the corpuscles of which it is composed. Its composition cannot always be the same and the quantity of air cannot even be the same at all times (478).

The scientists to whom Du Bos refers, who have proven that air contains infinitely many "little animals and their seeds," are not known. However, taking them into consideration, we can see that the wide variations in temperature and climate across the globe can be accounted for by the variability of the little animals and their seeds, whatever Du Bos took these to be, and emanations from the earth, as well as the effects of the sun.

In turn, the circulating air with its variable qualities has a direct impact on the organic matter with which it interacts. For humans and animals, "the properties of blood depend a lot on the air we breathe" (477). Air enters the body through the lungs, and affects the quality of blood. The quality of blood is crucial for determining human and animal characteristics, such as height, weight, strength, and skin tone. But it also determines moral and personal characteristics, such as intelligence, creativity, disposition, moral integrity, and genius: "this is why nations that live in different climates have such different minds and inclinations" (477). Whatever has been "stamped on" the air, by whatever vicissitudes that alter it, communicates directly to blood by being absorbed in the lungs of humans and animals. It is impossible to escape its effects. Indeed, the quality of air, whether it is dry, humid, hot, cold, or temperate *automatically* affects temperament. Consider two examples from Du Bos. Thunderstorms do not merely disturb us mentally, making us unable to think freely. They also "corrupt meat, … alter the state of an illness, or of a wound, [and] it is often fatal for those who have been operated on for kidney stones" (2.13). Presumably, it is the electric current of lightning and the shock wave of thunder that make changes such as these conceivable. Also, just as we notice in major urban centres in summer today, Du Bos notices that excessive heat causes madness and violence.

Let us take the physical and mental effects of climate in turn. Simply put, the location where an animal or human is born affects both their height and physical make-up. Animals and humans are akin to fruit:

> Indeed, the human machine is scarcely less dependent on the qualities of air in a country, on variations to which these qualities are subject, and on all changes that can help or hinder what we call the 'operations of nature,' than are fruits (477).

Evidence for the effect of climate on the physical make-up of animals is given at length. One type of evidence comes from moving an animal or human, from the place where it was born and grew up, to a new environment. Horses from Andalusia brought to the Americas become smaller and weaker in just a generation or two. Goats from Ancyra that were moved away from their native pasture lost their valuable fur. According to Du Bos, "the majority of animals cease to breed when transported into a climate radically different from their own. Tigers, apes, camels, elephants, and many species of birds do not reproduce in our countries" (496). Human beings are no less subject to physical changes upon changing geographical location. Two examples will make the point. Du Bos points to the case of the Portuguese in the East Indies, who in a few generations acquire features that resemble the indigenous population, whereas people born in Africa lose pigmentation after living for some time in Europe. Also attributed to climate is a phenomenon that happens to many travelers who eat food that is unfamiliar: they become sick (and, Du Bos points out, also homesick, which is also due to climate).

The effect of climate on physical bodies is one thing, but Du Bos is more concerned with its effect on minds and characters:

> But if climate difference can make such variety in the skin colour, stature, shape, and even the sound of the voice, it makes a bigger difference to the genius, inclinations, and customs of nations. Without comparison, the brain and parts of the body that, physically speaking, determine man's spirit and inclinations, are more composed and delicate than the bones and other parts that determine their stature and power. They are more fundamental than those that determine the sound of the voice and the body's agility. Two people having different qualities of blood can be as *dissimilar* on the outside as they are *dissimilar* in spirit. They differ more in inclination than in skin colour and shape (585).

Clearly, Du Bos is no Cartesian. Air acts on the lungs when we breathe, which in turn affects the quality of the blood, and this blood then has an effect on the brain and whatever other bodily parts work to determine our "spirit and inclinations." Consequently, one, perhaps unsurprising, implication of Du Bos' climate theory is that it is committed to radical cultural relativism. Habits

of character, such as drunkenness, prevail in some countries more than in others. Even moral virtues are culturally relative due to differences in climate:

> As it turns out, drunkenness and other vices are more common among one people than another. The same is true of moral virtues. The shape of the organs and temperament create a penchant toward certain vices, or even toward certain virtues that influence most people in every nation. Whenever luxury is introduced, it is always subject to the predominant inclination of the nation that falls into extravagance. Following a nation's taste, people are destroyed by magnificence, by putting up lavish buildings, having a fine meal, eating, and drinking to excess (486).

Du Bos was far from being alone at this time in thinking that people's moral character varied by geography. Nor was he alone in thinking that mental ability—intelligence, the ability to reason well—were also culturally relative. He endorses a quotation from Fontenelle's *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*: "See how much the fact of nature is changed between here and China. Other faces, other figures; other morals, and nearly other principles of reasoning." In his assessment of the artistic ability of indigenous people from Mexico, Peru, and North America, Du Bos again quotes Fontenelle: "In reality, I think still more and more, that there is a certain genius which has never yet been out of the limits of Europe" (436).

Both Du Bos and, apparently, Fontenelle, were, again perhaps unsurprisingly, deeply Eurocentric. Eurocentrism was not unusual among Europeans, many of whom considered Europe to be the prime example of intellectual and artistic culture. Du Bos of course recognizes that other places in the world have their own cultures, but for him they all fall radically short of those of Europe. "The liberal arts have never left Europe except to stroll, if it is permitted to speak thus, on the coasts of Asia and Africa" (433). Even foreign inventions such as Chinese gunpowder and printing only see perfection in the hands of Europeans. As we point out in our translation, sometimes Du Bos gets the facts wrong about whether other cultures had achieved various things, such as his false claim that in modern China, no one has been able to predict an eclipse. In fact, however, the Chinese were predicting eclipses as early as 8 BC.[105]

105 Hugh Thurston, *Early Astronomy* (New York: 1994), 85.

The most favourable climatic conditions are, therefore, in Europe as well as Egypt. This helps to explain the origin of art itself, since the extremely favourable conditions in Egypt led to its very development. Arts were not transplanted into Egypt; rather, the conditions were so favourable that Egyptians were able to give birth to the arts. Despite being favourable, however, Egyptian conditions are not as good as those of Europe. He explains that, when the Greeks transplanted the art of painting to Europe, the move was effectively from "a fallow field adjacent to a forest" (430). But not everywhere in Europe are the conditions equally suitable for producing great artists and great art. English conditions are poor for art, and especially for painting. In Spain, the climate is too hot to produce good painters. And there are simply no good poets north of Holland (although Du Bos admits that their painters are very good). Even in the same country the production of great art can vary dramatically, depending on the stability of climate. Just like wines from year to year, people can vary from year to year in character and ability. A bad winter will prevent the opportunity for getting adequate exercise, for example, and will thereby affect the development of children. A scorching summer can do the same.

Du Bos structures his entire discussion of climate and genius around one overarching question: how do the arts progress and flourish? We will use this overarching question to show the links between Du Bos' theory of climate and his theory of genius. There are, Du Bos observes, two possible explanations for the progress of art: it is due either to human, social causes or to physical causes. In particular, Du Bos is interested in finding the answer to why the arts seem to progress suddenly, as if bursting out of nowhere into a heyday of artistic innovation and success. Such are the golden periods of art so celebrated by Du Bos: the era of Plato, of Augustus, of Leo X, and of Louis XIV, as mentioned above. Du Bos sees some sort of a paradox: whereas "there are countries and times in which arts and letters do not flourish, though the social causes that promote their advancement are present," yet "arts and letters … progress suddenly," no matter the social causes that are present (429). Human, or social causes, therefore, such as the financial support for artists provided by political leaders or wealthy investors, or a healthy and peaceful society protected from the ravages of war and other scourges, seem to have no effect on the progress of arts and letters, either positively or negatively. In fact, Du Bos claims that even when social effort is put into preserving the arts, when they are beginning to decay due to decadence or lack of available talent, it has no appreciable effect. Moreover, when countries are in the midst of serious wars and other invasions, the progress of art seems to march along to its own drum, or not, for some other reasons.

Those other reasons, according to Du Bos, are the physical causes that uniquely explain the progress in arts and letters. The regularity and habitability of climate accounts for the success of art. Healthy earthly emanations and the right amount of sunlight will produce air that is highly conducive to producing healthy crops, and to enlivening human blood via its circulation in the lungs, thereby transmitting its animal spirits into the human body. The blood feeds the brain, which Du Bos takes to be the seat of reasoning and artistic genius, when it is present. The genius of poets and painters,

> consists in a fortunate arrangement of the organs of the brain, in a good formation of each of these organs, and in the quality of blood that inclines it to agitate during work, in such a way that it provides a lot of spirits to the springs that perform the functions of the imagination (360).

Du Bos' theory of genius, therefore, is physicalist, or material, and is committed to determinism. In other words, genius can be found naturally occurring in certain individuals who, for primarily environmental, climatic reasons, find themselves endowed with it at birth.

Why are some people born with genius, whereas it skips others altogether? Du Bos' answer to this question bears strong similarities to Epicureanism and may have been influenced by that school of philosophy, which had become *de rigueur* in the early modern period. The Epicurean overtone is unmistakable here: "Nature has distributed its abilities among people in order to render them necessary to each other, since the needs of peoples is the first bond of society" (357). But what is not Epicurean is Du Bos' Christian commitment that, whatever occurs in nature or in society, there is a providential order behind it:

> It even seems that providence intended to make certain talents and certain inclinations more common among a certain people than among other peoples. This is to establish between nations the reciprocal dependence that providence has taken care to establish between individual people. The needs that commit individuals to entering into a society with one another also commits nations to bind themselves in a society. Thus, providence desires that nations form an agreement with each other to exchange talents and skills, just as they exchange the various fruits of their countries. This is in order that they reciprocally exchange, for the same reason that individuals join together to form a people: the desire for well being or the longing to be better off (357).

Thus, even though the natural environment, and not social forces, explains the existence of artistic genius, Du Bos' nature is God-given, so at the end of the day, the distribution of genius is providentially ordained.

One is born, and cannot become, a genius. However, the possession of artistic genius is only a necessary but not sufficient condition to explain how works of artistic genius actually get produced.

> Genius is a plant that, so to speak, pushes itself; but quality, like the quantity of fruits, depends very much on the care it receives. The most fortunate genius can only be perfected with the help of lengthy study (376).

Young children born with genius but lacking the means to cultivate it will eventually give off signs, and someone trained to notice these uncultivated but distinctive signs of genius will find a way to help. This is true of all types of genius, from artistic to mathematical, architectural, and military. However, some people born with genius die before their genius is made known (2.4). This is often true of soldiers, who could have become genius military leaders, had they not died.

We find it interesting to compare Du Bos' explanation for artistic genius with others that came before. At the time he was writing, Du Bos had access to two sources providing a theory of genius, Plato and the writer he knew as "Longinus." Plato's theory of art and artists, which is not advanced in a particularly flattering or positive way, depicts the phenomenon as a kind of madness, a frenzy, and a divine possession:

> … the Muse makes some people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts is suspended. You know, none of the epic poets, if they're good, are masters of their subject; they are inspired, possessed, and that is how they utter all those beautiful poems. The same goes for lyric poets if they're good: just as Corybantes are not in their right minds when they dance, lyric poets, too are not in their right minds when they make those beautiful lyrics, but as soon as they sail into harmony and rhythm they are possessed by Bacchic frenzy (*Ion* 533e–534a).

But Plato does not specifically refer to the phenomenon of genius itself, nor does his successor, Aristotle. Instead, Aristotle speaks of artists being caught up in a "divine frenzy," and Du Bos makes several references to this characterization (656).

It is more likely that Longinus is the primary inspiration for Du Bos' interest in and theory of genius, although there are a number of differences between them. As we discussed in Section 6 on the Quarrel Between the Ancients and Moderns, Longinus also contributed another major theme to discussions of art and artists in the late-17th and early-18th centuries, namely, his theory of the sublime. The sublime and genius are bound up with one another. According to Longinus, to say that a literary composition, which is his primary topic of interest, is sublime is not to say that it is without flaws. In this sense, Longinus and Du Bos are in agreement: sometimes a great work of art, indeed a sublime work of art, needs to bend, if not break, the canon of artistic rules. It is thereby imperfect, but nonetheless can be sublime. Unlike Plato, for whom divinely inspired artistic madness was something to be warned about, and possibly to be avoided, Longinus takes artistic genius to be an unequivocal good. Also unlike Plato, Longinus did not think that genius was a product of the supernatural but was, instead, natural and innate.

The popularity of Longinus' views on the sublime and on genius at this time can readily be explained by the fact that they greatly resonated with the practice of scientific method. For Longinus, genius can produce works that are sublime *only when* they violate the accepted canon of artistic rules. Similar to the scientific method, the violation serves as a challenge to the null hypothesis, generating genuine novelty only because they deviate from and thereby surpass the generally accepted set of established rules. No doubt Du Bos' deeply empiricist sensibility led him to reflect upon Longinus' interpretation of both genius and the sublime, and to develop it in his own, distinctive direction in the *Critical Reflections*.

8 Du Bos on Empiricism and Philosophy of Science

Du Bos' primary contribution to philosophy is his role in the founding of modern philosophy of art. Nevertheless, he also deserves credit as someone who contributed to the revolt against Cartesianism in France and to the spread of empiricism to Continental Europe. A book as widely read as the *Critical Reflections* must have helped shape thinking about science in 18th-century France. Du Bos' approach to philosophy of art was thoroughly empiricist and so was his attitude towards science. He deserves credit for applying Locke's empirical account of knowledge to scientific hypotheses.

The *Critical Reflections* represented a departure from Cartesianism. This is, as noted above, the view that we acquire knowledge by discovering, by means of *a priori* reflection, certain indubitable truths and then deduce further knowledge

from these indubitable truths. According to the standard account of the history of philosophy, the Cartesian picture of knowledge and, in particular, scientific knowledge dominated France from shortly after the publication of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637) until well into the 18th century.[106] Du Bos adopted, in place of Cartesianism, an empiricist epistemology. According to empiricism, all knowledge of the world is acquired *a posteriori*, or by means of the senses. As noted above, he calls experience "the best teacher that humankind has." This is evidence that Cartesianism was not as widespread as is usually thought.

John Locke seems to have had a considerable impact on Du Bos' thinking. Locke was the great champion of empiricism at the end of the 17th century, with his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* appearing in 1690. The Frenchman travelled to England in 1698 with a view to broadening his intellectual horizons. Locke was among the men of letters Du Bos encountered in the course of his English sojourn. It seems that they became quite good friends. When Du Bos left England, Locke accompanied him to the boat for Holland. Moreover, Locke and Du Bos continued to correspond until shortly before Locke's death.[107] Du Bos contributed to the spread of Locke's reputation in France and was certainly familiar with Locke's *Essay*. When the French translation of the *Essay* was made, Locke sent Du Bos a copy.

Other figures likely encouraged Du Bos to adopt empiricism. As noted above, he was a good friend of Pierre Bayle, the sceptic. Du Bos mentions Francis Bacon, who was greatly admired in British scientific circles at the end of the 17th century, and is widely recognized as the founder of the empiricist school. Du Bos may also have been familiar with the writings of Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle. Certainly, however, he came under the influence of Locke and we find in the *Critical Reflections* passages that seem to recall the *Essay*. In certain respects, however, Du Bos adopts empiricist views about science that go beyond anything Locke says.

As already noted, Du Bos' approach to philosophy of art can be seen as an application of empiricist principles to the study of art. The school of criticism that Du Bos rejected was essentially Cartesian and rationalist. As we have seen, it held that there are axioms or first principles of criticism. Critics are supposed to infer from these principles whether any particular work is successful. Du Bos

106 Rob Illiffe, "Philosophy of Science," in *Eighteenth-Century Science*, [The Cambridge History of Science] 4, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: 2003), 269.

107 Du Bos' surviving letters to Locke are printed in Gabriel Bonno, "Une Amité franco-anglaise du XVII[e] siècle: John Locke et l'Abbé Du Bos (avec 16 lettres inédites de Du Bos à Locke)," *Revue de la Littérature Comparée* 24 (1950), 481–520. Locke's letters to Du Bos seem not to have survived.

rejects this picture, writing that, "if there is some matter where reason should fall silent in the face of experience, it is certainly in questions that can be raised regarding the value of a poem. It is when we want to know whether a poem is pleasing or not; if, generally speaking, a poem is an excellent work or just average … there are few general principles to rely on regarding the value of a poem" (531). Du Bos instead stresses the importance of sentiments, that is, the feelings we have in response to works of art.

Certainly, Du Bos is completely opposed to Cartesian rationalism. He sees himself aligned with others who reject philosophical system building, such as that we find in Leibniz. Du Bos writes that,

> The two most famous philosophical organizations in Europe, the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Royal Society of London, refuse to adopt or build a single general system of natural science. Agreeing with the view of Chancellor Bacon, they have espoused not a single one out of fear that having to justify it should draw attention from onlookers and make them see experiments not as they truly are, but as they should be, in order to give weight to an opinion they try to pass off as true. Our two famous academies rest content to verify facts and publish them in their journals, persuaded that nothing is easier according to reason and that they would stumble if they took two steps beyond what they acquired from experience. These two organizations expect a general system on the basis of first-hand experience (527).

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons. For a start, it rejects the construction of grand philosophical systems. This was the period when they abounded: Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, George Berkeley, and others developed grand, even grandiose, philosophical systems that lacked any empirical basis.

Another passage from Du Bos also indicates his rejection of the idea that all knowledge ought to be deduced from first principles. He discusses the circulation of blood, which was discovered by William Harvey in the 17th century. By the time the *Critical Reflections* were published, no one any longer challenged Harvey's hypothesis. People have accepted the hypothesis, Du Bos writes, because

> they know that it no longer relies on reasoning for its proof and that it is demonstrated by experience. To repeat, people have much more confidence in those who tell them "I have seen" than in those who tell them "I have concluded" (589).

Here, Du Bos clearly indicates that he thinks that empirical evidence is a much more reliable source of knowledge than the sort of *a priori* reasoning recommended by Cartesianism.

Du Bos makes a similar point about the sort of knowledge a physician has. A physician, he suggests, may start out a Cartesian, but will end up an empiricist. Du Bos writes that,

> At twenty-five, a doctor is as persuaded of the truth of his anatomical reasoning, which tries to discover the manner by which cinchona bark works to alleviate intermittent fevers, as he is by the effectiveness of the remedy. By age sixty, a doctor is persuaded by the truth of a fact that he has seen multiple times, but he does not put any faith in the explanation of the effect of the remedy than *by the piling up of examples*, if it permitted to use that expression (530).

In medicine, as in other areas of science, Du Bos holds, one may start out trying to make inferences from first principles. Experience, however, will transform the wise physician into an empiricist. Du Bos makes the same point by reference to navigation, military engineering, and other sciences.

Du Bos' commitment to empiricism is manifested in other ways as well. He is clear that modern science has surpassed ancient science only because moderns have stumbled upon more empirical evidence than was available to the ancients. As noted elsewhere in this Introduction, Du Bos is much concerned with the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. At one point, he leaves the question of whether ancients or moderns were better artists and considers whether modern scientists reason better than their ancient counterparts. Du Bos' conclusion is that modern scientists do not reason better and that modern science has surpassed ancient science only because people have acquired more experience since ancient times. Moreover, Du Bos believes that a lot of the experiences that have made scientific progress possible have been acquired by mere chance.

Du Bos considers four modern scientific advances: the discovery of air pressure, the discovery of the compass, the invention of printing, and the invention of the telescope. In considering these discoveries, Du Bos had his own agenda: he wanted to prove that the ancients did not reason more poorly than do modern scientists. Consequently, he stresses that modern scientists cannot claim credit for many scientific advances. Ordinary sailors, for example, discovered the compass. Jacob Metius, an ordinary lens grinder, was responsible for the telescope. Moreover, these advances are owing to fortuitous circumstances, not superior reasoning. For present purposes, however, the important point is that

Du Bos emphasizes that these discoveries are all owing to the acquisition of new experience. Scientists then went on to conduct experiments, acquire even more experiences, and make new discoveries.

When Du Bos is concerned with a scientific question, he proceeds in the way recommended by Bacon, Newton, Boyle, and other writers on scientific method. He considers a hypothesis and determines whether it is supported by empirical evidence. For example, much of Book Two of the *Critical Reflections* is taken up with the question of how to explain how certain eras are more productive of great geniuses than are others. As we have seen, Du Bos entertains two hypotheses. The first is that there is a social explanation. That is, he considers the possibility that certain societies are organized in such a way that they encourage geniuses to develop. Perhaps, for example, certain societies have more generous patrons, and this is the cause of the flourishing of geniuses. The social hypothesis predicts that in societies with generous patrons, we will also find large numbers of geniuses. Du Bos refutes this hypothesis by providing examples of eras where there are generous patrons, but no geniuses are found and the arts do not flourish. He also considers societies where the social preconditions of genius exist, but where we find no geniuses. For example, England has a great many patrons, but is unable to produce any painters of the first or even second rank.

Having refuted the hypothesis that genius has a social cause, Du Bos considers the possibility that it has a physical cause. That is, he considers the possibility that environmental factors are responsible for the fact that geniuses are numerous at certain times and places, but completely absent from other times and places. Du Bos supports this hypothesis by attempting to find a correlation between certain environmental, climatic, and dietary factors and the emergence of geniuses. We now know that Du Bos was deeply misguided and that genius cannot be explained by reference to physical (environmental and other) causes. For present purposes, however, the important point is that he regards questions about the flourishing of geniuses as an empirical question.

In the context of his discussion of the physical explanation of genius, Du Bos makes a striking claim. Although he endorses the physical hypothesis, he writes that, "I distrust physical explanations, since the imperfection of this science almost always makes guesswork necessary" (362). That is, Du Bos recognizes that in scientific investigation, there is always some uncertainty about the conclusion. In other words, a scientific hypothesis is only probable to some extent or another. Du Bos adopts precisely the same attitude towards other scientific hypotheses. For example, he makes reference to Harvey's hypothesis of the circulation of blood and writes that, "Most scholars of his time were persuaded by his views. It was as firmly and widely established as a scientific truth as some-

thing that is not directly observed can be. That is, it was regarded as a view more probable than the contrary opinion" (588).

Boyle seems to have influenced these passages, either directly or via the mediation of other figures. Boyle wrote that,

> And here let us further consider, That as confidently as many Atomists, and other Naturalists, presume to know the true and genuine Causes of the Things they attempt to explicate, yet very often the utmost they can attain to in their Explications, is, That the explicated *Phænomena* May be produc'd after such a Manner as they deliver, but not that they really Are so: For as an Artificer can set all the Wheels of a Clock a going, as well with Springs as with Weights, and may with violence discharge a Bullet out of the Barrel of a Gun, not only by means of Gunpowder, but of compress'd Air, and even of a Spring. So the same Effects may be produc'd by divers Causes different from one another; and it will oftentimes be very difficult, if not impossible for our dim Reasons to discern surely which of those several ways, whereby it is possible for Nature to produce the same *Phænomena* she has really made use of to exhibit them.[108]

In this passage Boyle, like Du Bos, holds that a number of hypotheses can be compatible with the empirical evidence. We can be certain, both writers hold, about the observed phenomena. It is uncertain, however, which of the hypotheses that explain the phenomena is correct.

In adopting this view of scientific hypotheses, Du Bos was probably also following the lead of his friend Locke. According to Locke, we can have knowledge of what directly and currently falls under our experience. So, for example, I have an experience of a computer keyboard at present. We cannot, however, know that things that we are not currently experiencing exist. In his *Essay* Locke writes that, "though it be highly probable, that Millions of Men do now exist, yet whilst I am alone writing this, I have not that Certainty of it, which we strictly call knowledge" (4.11.10). Similarly, from Locke's perspective, certain scientific hypotheses make claims about more than what we currently observe. He writes that, "though we see the yellow Colour, and upon trial find the Weight, Malleableness, Fusibility, and Fixedness, that are united in a piece of Gold; yet because no one of these *Ideas* has any evident *dependence*, or necessary connexion with the other, we cannot certainly know, that where any four of these

108 Robert Boyle, "Some Considerations touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy" (1663), in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis, 14 vols. (London: 1999–2000), vol. 3, 255–256.

are, the fifth will be there also" (4.3.14). Similarly, the hypothesis that a physical cause explains why geniuses are more common in certain eras than others goes beyond what is directly observed. It is matter for belief, as Locke would say, not knowledge. The same can be said about Harvey's hypothesis about the circulation of blood. Locke, unlike Du Bos, never quite explicitly says that scientific hypotheses are uncertain because they go beyond what experience can establish.

In his own research and in his attitude towards the research of scientists in a variety of disciplines, Du Bos was thoroughly empiricist. His *Critical Reflections* indicate that Cartesianism was not as ubiquitous in early-18th-century France as is sometimes suggested. Moreover, such a widely read and highly respected book seems certain to have contributed to the spread of empiricism in 18th-century France.

9 A Note on the Text and the Translation

As already noted, Du Bos' *Critical Reflections* were widely read in the 18th century. Seven editions were published in France in the course of this century. The first edition of 1719 was succeeded by further editions in 1732, 1733, 1740, 1746, 1755, and 1770. An additional French edition was printed in Dresden in 1760. It was translated into German and Dutch, and an English translation appeared in 1748 (of which, more anon). No less a figure than Lessing translated part of the *Critical Reflections* into German.

The *Critical Reflections* underwent a significant revision and expansion for the fourth (1740) edition. Book One of the first editions included Du Bos' reflections on performances in the ancient theatre. For the fourth edition, he expanded these reflections and devoted all of Book Three to this topic. The present translation is made from the sixth (1755) edition of the *Critical Reflections*. The sixth edition is a reprint of the 1740 edition, the last that Du Bos supervised before his death. Moreover, the sixth edition is the basis for modern French editions of the work. These considerations made the sixth edition the obvious choice for translation.

Even for those with good French, an English translation is desirable. Du Bos is by no means easy to read, even by those with strong French. His sentences are long and rambling. Voltaire would agree with this verdict on Du Bos' French. He wrote of Du Bos that, "the judgement is good, the style bad. It is necessary to read him, but re-reading him would be tiresome."[109] The translators of this

109 Voltaire, *Correspondence*, ed. Theodore Besterman (Paris: 1964), letter 3917.

edition often pored over a single sentence for fifteen or twenty minutes trying to discern Du Bos' meaning. Reading the work is complicated by the fact that the French is a little dated. Although the *Critical Reflections* were published less than thirty years before Batteux's *Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (1746), the French is noticeably more old-fashioned. Fortunately, the translators could consult the ARTFL Project's *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*.[110] This tool makes it possible to simultaneously search several historic French dictionaries including several editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, among them the first (1694) and fourth (1762). It was to these editions of the *Dictionnaire* that we most frequently had recourse since they are chronologically closest to the date of the original publication of the *Critical Reflections*. Not surprisingly, given the wide range of topics Du Bos addressed, a huge vocabulary is required to read his book. In short, the *Critical Reflections* is not an easy read.

Until now, students not wishing to cope with Du Bos' torturous French have had to rely on an 18th-century English translation. Thomas Nugent (ca. 1700–1772) translated Du Bos's book into English as *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (London: 1748). The *Dictionary of National Biography* characterizes Nugent as "a competent scholar and an able and industrious man of letters."[111] He was active primarily as an historian and translator. He seems to have had a good mastery of French and was the author of *A New Pocket Dictionary of the French and English Languages*. The first edition of this dictionary appeared in 1767 and was frequently reprinted. (The translators of this edition consulted the second edition of this work at a number of points.[112])

Given that a translation of the *Critical Reflections* exists, one might wonder why a new translation is needed. Nugent's translation is frequently quite useful. As already indicated, he had a good grasp of French and he often nails the translation of certain difficult passages, including some passages in which Du Bos uses unfamiliar French idioms. The general drift of the *Critical Reflections* can certainly be gleaned from Nugent's translation, at least most of the time. On the whole, however, the translation is seriously unsatisfactory. At times, the translation is unintentionally comical. (For example, Nugent translates '*grossiers*' as 'heavier' rather than 'coarser.' The result is the statement that French "peasants are vastly heavier than those of Sicily."[113]) At others, his sentence structure

110 This is the Project for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language: https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/about-artfl.

111 Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: 1895), vol. 41, 273.

112 Thomas Nugent, *A New Pocket Dictionary of the French and English Languages*, 2nd ed. (London: 1774).

113 Nugent, *Critical Reflections*, vol. 1, 148.

mirrors Du Bos' convoluted and difficult sentence structure. The result can be impenetrable. Here and there, Nugent leaves out a sentence or sentences. Often this is because Du Bos's writing can be repetitive, but sometimes part of Du Bos' meaning is lost. Worst of all, Nugent seems not to have understood certain passages from Du Bos. The result can be sentences in which the sense of Du Bos' French is garbled, obscured, or (in a few cases) even reversed. The need for a readable and accurate translation of Du Bos is readily apparent.

The present translation aims to be accurate, comprehensive, and, above all, readable. A word-for-word translation of the original text would inherit many of the faults of the original French. Such a translation (as Nugent's frequently proves) would be prolix to the point of being unreadable. Our most common intervention, in aid of readability, is the division of Du Bos' sentences into shorter ones. Other than this, we have been scrupulously faithful to the original. We believe that our concessions to readability are compatible with scrupulous fidelity. Faithful translation sometimes requires that the English sound a little stilted. We have been occasionally willing to tolerate inelegant English so long as it is easy to read and faithful to the original.

No properly annotated and scholarly edition of the *Critical Reflections* exists in any language. Some modern French editions flesh out Du Bos' notes a little, but no one has made any attempt to trace all of the references and allusions in the text. No one has provided an edition with explanatory notes. Du Bos has been poorly served by modern scholars. This edition is fully annotated and includes detailed explanatory notes.

The translators faced challenges in annotating this edition. For a start, many of the extensive Latin and French quotations are inaccurate. This made tracing them a challenge. Du Bos often mentions only by surname writers who, while well known in the early-18th century, are now all but forgotten. Other references consisted only in abbreviated titles. These references were often difficult to trace. For example, in one footnote we find "*L'Oyseau des Ordres*." Considerable Google-fu was required to determine that Du Bos refers to Charles Loyseau, *Traités des ordres et simples dignités* (1613). Worse, some of Du Bos' references are wildly mistaken. For example, in 3.12 Du Bos refers to a book on ancient theatre by "P. Boulanger, S.J." Extensive efforts to trace this book were unsuccessful until we realized that Du Bos meant to refer to Pierre Brumoy, *Le Theatre des Grecs*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1730). This inaccurate citation, and others like it, has gone uncorrected in every edition since the original publication of the *Critical Reflections*. In the end, however, we were able to trace virtually every reference in the book. All of the quotations have been corrected.

Scholars have failed to agree on a spelling of Du Bos' name, some calling him Du Bos, others calling him Dubos and even some favouring Du bos. It is

unclear why there has been this disagreement. In his surviving letters, Du Bos subscribes himself "Du Bos" and in early editions of the *Critical Reflections* that is how his name appears.

Finally, some information on formatting. Footnotes in Du Bos' original text are inserted into the main text in square brackets *verbatim* and unexpanded (he usually writes with abbreviated titles). To these we have frequently added additional information, which is contained in the footnotes provided entirely by the translators. All ancient sources are cited by book and section (or act and scene) thus: 4.2. Where line numbers are also provided, they are indicated thus: 4.2.43. Where appropriate, a similar system is employed for the citation of modern sources. When possible, texts for the ancient sources are taken from the Perseus Digital Library. Where a source of the English translations of these texts is not provided, the source is also Perseus.

10 Further Reading

The literature on Du Bos is vast and scholars from a wide range of disciplines (including literary criticism, art history, history, and philosophy) have contributed to it. Some of this literature is now rather dated, but the following works are recommended to those interested in investigating Du Bos' thought in greater detail. Our hope is that this scholarly edition of his work will encourage more people, particularly philosophers, to write about Du Bos' ideas.

Dauvois, Daniel and Daniel Dumouchel (eds.), *Vers L'Esthétique: Penser avec les* Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture (*1719*) *de Jean-Baptiste Du Bos* (Paris: 2015). An important recent collection of essays on Du Bos' contributions to aesthetics.

Evans, Benjamin, "Beginning with Boredom: Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' Approach to the Arts," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 9 (2017), 147–159. A recent assessment of Du Bos' approach to aesthetics.

Guyer, Paul, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, vol. 1: The Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: 2014). Places Du Bos in the context of the emergence of modern aesthetics in the 18th century and recognizes his seminal role.

Jones, Peter, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: 1982). Chapter 3 contains an excellent discussion of Du Bos' influence on David Hume's essays.

Koller, Armin Hajman, *The Abbé Du Bos—His Advocacy of the Theory of Climate* (Champaign, Ill.: 1937). An investigation of Du Bos' theory of genius, particularly as it relates to the thought of Herder.

Livingston, Paisley, "Du Bos' Paradox," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53 (2013), 393–406. Takes seriously Du Bos' solution to the paradox of tragedy.

Lombard, Alfred, *L'Abbé Du Bos: Un initiateur de la pensée modern* (*1670–1742*) (Paris: 1913). An excellent study of Du Bos' life, ideas, and influence. Still the standard work on Du Bos, though overtaken by modern scholarship in certain respects.

BOOK 1

Preface

I attempt, in the first part of this work, to explain in what the beauty of a picture or the beauty of a poem principally consists, what merit each can have from conformity to rules, and, finally, what assistance works of poetry and works of painting can borrow from the other arts, in order to show to the greatest advantage.*

In the second part, I address the qualities, either natural or acquired, that make great painters as well as great poets, and I have sought the cause which can render some eras so fruitful and other eras so devoid of celebrated artists. Next, I examine how the reputation of celebrated artists is established and the signs that predict whether fame in their own time is a lasting renown or merely a passing fad. Finally, I ask about the signs on the basis of which we can predict that the reputation of a painter or poet, vaunted by his contemporaries, will always increase, so that it will be even more prized in times to come than it has been in his own.

The third part of this work is completely devoted to the exposition of some discoveries that I have made concerning the theatrical productions of the ancients. In previous editions of my work, this exposition was found in the first part. I had located it in the work where the subject seemed to demand. But I have been made to see that my digression, inserted where it was, lost sight for too long of the principal subject matter. Thus, I have followed the advice that has been given to me to produce a separate volume and I have followed it more willingly, since the additions that I have made to the dissertation in question would have made my fault even greater.

* Du Bos wrote this preface for the fourth edition of his book, published in 1740.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_003

Part One

We see every day that verse and paintings cause a striking pleasure; but it is not easy to explain in what this pleasure consists. This often resembles suffering, the symptoms of which are sometimes even those of the most intense sadness. The art of poetry and the art of painting are never more praised than when they have succeeded in making us suffer.

The affecting representation of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter,[1] when set in a frame, is the most beautiful ornament in a room that one wants to render pleasing by its furnishings. One neglects, in order to contemplate this tragic painting, comic subjects and the most cheerful subjects of pleasing painters. A poem whose principal subject is the violent death of a young princess, is included in the proceedings of a party and this tragedy is designed to be the greatest pleasure of the company, gathered to be entertained.[2] Generally speaking, at the theatre, people feel more pleasure crying than laughing.

In short, the more that the actions depicted in poetry or painting would have made the humanity in us suffer, if we had really seen them, the more the imitations that these arts present have the power to attract us. These actions, everyone says, are the subjects that please us. Thus, a secret charm attaches us to the representations that painters and poets know how to make, while at the same time nature testifies against its own pleasure by stirring up an internal shuddering.

I dare undertake to lessen this paradox and to explain the origin of the pleasure that poems and paintings cause in us. Less audacious enterprises can seem reckless. I aim to give everyone an account of his likes and dislikes; I aim to instruct others about the nature of the sentiments arising in them.[3] Thus I can-

1 The Biblical Book of Judges relates how Jephthah, a leader of the ancient Israelites, swears, in return for divine assistance in defeating the Ammonites, that he will sacrifice the first thing that he sees upon returning home from battle. In the event, he first sees his beloved daughter. Christian commentators and Church Fathers give various interpretations of this story, most of which find some way to moralize for the good this heinous act. Jewish scholars have tried to minimize the horror of the story by reading Jephthah's daughter's death metaphorically.

2 Here Du Bos is concerned with the paradox of tragedy: the willingness of audiences to experience works of art that arouse in them unpleasant emotion. His position is discussed in Hume's essay, "Of Tragedy." See the Introduction, Section 5, for details.

3 Here Du Bos introduces the key concept of 'sentiment'. The word *sentiment* can mean both a feeling and an opinion, but Du Bos uses the word primarily to mean a subjective feeling. He believes that we have a sense of beauty that provides us with sentiments, in this sense, when viewing works of art. See Introduction, Section 4.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_004

not hope to be believed if I cannot in my book manage to make the reader recognize what happens inside him: in short, the most intimate movements of his heart. One scarcely hesitates to reject as distorting the mirror in which one does not recognize oneself.

Writers who reason about matters less touchy, if it is permitted to speak thus, often err with impunity. In order to get to the bottom of their errors, it is necessary to reflect and often even to train oneself, but the subject that I dare to treat is apparent to everyone. Each person has his own rule or compass applicable to my arguments and each will feel the error when my arguments deviate even a little from the truth.

On the other hand, one renders an important service to two arts, counted among the most beautiful ornaments of polite societies, by philosophically examining how they have such an effect on people. A book which, so to speak, unravels the human heart at the instant when it is affected by a poem or touched by a picture, would give to our artists a very broad and illuminatingly accurate perspective on the general effect of their works, which most of them have such difficulty anticipating. Painters and poets must pardon me for often calling them 'artisans' in the course of these *Reflections*. The veneration that I here express for the arts that they profess will show them that it is only for fear of repeating too often the same thing that I do not always join to the name 'artisan' the word 'illustrious' or some other suitable epithet.[4] The goal of being useful to them is even one of the motives which led me to publish these *Reflections*, that I give as the observations of a simple citizen, who makes use of examples drawn from the past, with the aim of preparing their Republic[5] even better to meet the challenges to come. If I sometimes take on the tone of a legislator, it is only inadvertently, and not because I think that I have the authority [to legislate in the republic of the arts].

4 The usage of the word 'artist,' with the respect that term implies, was not yet established in Du Bos's lifetime. Elsewhere we translate '*artisan*' as 'artist' except when Du Bos uses the word to refer to a craftsman, rather than to what we would think of as an artist.

5 Authors in the 18th century often spoke of the Republic of Letters. The Latin version of this name, *respublica literaria*, has been traced to Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454) in the 15th century. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) translated the term into French in the title of his journal, *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, first published in 1684.

CHAPTER 1

Of the Necessity of Being Occupied in order to Avoid Ennui, and of the Attraction That Movements of the Passions Have for People.

People have no natural pleasure that is not the fruit of need and this is, perhaps, what Plato wanted to express when he said, in his allegorical style, that Love was born of the marriage of Need and Abundance.[1] Those who write a course of lectures on philosophy show us the wisdom of the precautions that providence has taken, and the means it has chosen, to require men, by the attraction of pleasure, to provide for their own conservation. It is sufficient for me that this incontestable truth forms the basis of my reasoning.

The greater the need, the greater the pleasure we feel in satisfying it. At the most delicious feasts, when one has only an ordinary appetite, one does not experience a pleasure as lively as that someone feels in satisfying a real hunger with plain fare. Art is a poor substitute for nature and all its refinements would not be able to prime, so to speak, pleasure as well as need.

The soul has its needs as well as the body and one of the greatest human needs is to have the mind occupied. The ennui that soon follows inaction of the soul is a sickness so painful for people that they often undertake the most painful labours so that they are spared the pain of being tormented by ennui.

It is easy to conceive how bodily exertions, even those that seem to demand the least application, cannot fail to occupy the mind. Apart from these opportunities [for bodily exertion], the soul can only be occupied in two ways: either the soul submits to the impressions that external objects make on it, and we call this sensation; or it supports itself by speculation on certain matters, some useful, some intriguing, and we call this reflection or meditation.

The soul finds painful, and sometimes even impracticable, this second manner of occupying itself, especially when an actual or recent sentiment is not the subject of its reflections. It is then necessary that the soul makes continual efforts to follow the object of its attention, and its efforts are often rendered unsuccessful by the present disposition of the organs of the brain, ending only in a vain and sterile situation. Or the over-heated imagination can no longer

1 Plato (ca. 427–ca. 347 BC). His dialogue, *The Symposium*, is an investigation of love. Du Bos refers to *Symposium* 203b.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_005

distinctly present any object and an infinity of unconnected and unrelated ideas tumultuously succeed each other one after the other. Or the spirit, tired of being rapt, relaxes and a dreary and languishing reverie, during which it enjoys with clarity no object, is the sole product of the efforts that it has made to occupy itself. There is no one who has not experienced the ennui of this state, where one has not the strength to think of anything, and the pain of this other state, where in spite of oneself, one thinks of too many things, without being able to fix one's thought on anything in particular. Few people are happy enough to experience only rarely one of these two states and usually able to be good company to themselves. A small number can learn the art which, in the words of Horace, makes a man live in friendship with himself: *Quid te tibi reddat amicum*.[2] He must, in order to be capable of this, have a certain temperament [*tempérament d'humeurs*], which makes those who have it from birth as obliged to providence as those who are the eldest sons of sovereigns. He must also have applied himself from youth to studies and occupations the practice of which demands a great deal of meditation. It is necessary that the mind acquire the habit of ordering its ideas and reflecting on what it has read; for reading, when the mind is not active and does not sustain reflection on what it has read, soon becomes subject to ennui. We train the imagination by using it and then this tamed faculty does what we ask of it. One acquires, by means of meditation, the habit of transporting at will one's thought from one object to another or of fixing one's thoughts on a given object.

This conversation with oneself provides those who know how to do it shelter from the state of languor and misery of which we speak. But, as I have said, people with blood without bitterness and humours without venom, destined for a gentle life of the mind, are very rare. The situation of their mind is unknown to common people who, judging what other people must suffer from solitude from what they themselves suffer from it, conclude that solitude is acutely painful for everyone. Thinking that solitude is acutely painful for everyone, they judge that other people must suffer from solitude because they themselves do.

The first above-mentioned manner of occupying ourselves, namely yielding to the impressions that external objects make on us, is much the easiest. It is the only recourse most of humanity have to counter ennui. Even those who know how to occupy themselves otherwise are obliged to adopt the activities and pleasures of common people, in order to avoid falling into the languor that follows a stretch in the same occupation. Changing occupation and pleasure

2 Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65–8 BC), the leading Roman lyric poet of his time. Du Bos refers to Horace's *Epistles* 1.18.101: "What will make you a friend to yourself?"

sets in motion minds that have begun to drag; this change seems to give the exhausted imagination a new vigour.

Here is why we see people entangled by so many frivolous and useless concerns. Here is what causes them to run passionately after what they call their pleasure, and to give themselves to passions whose unfortunate consequences they know from their own experience. The anxiety that these matters cause, and the activities that they require, cannot be in themselves agreeable to people. The passions which give people the most intense pleasures also cause the most painful and enduring suffering; but men still fear more the ennui that follows inaction and they find in the activities of life and in the intoxication of the passions an excitement that keeps them occupied. The agitations that the passions revive, even during solitude, prevent people from coming to know themselves. That is, without being active, people find themselves in a state of suffering or ennui.

When people, disgusted by what we call the world, resolve to renounce it, they rarely stick to their resolution. As soon as they have experienced inaction, as soon as they have compared [inaction with] what they suffered from the entanglements of life and from the disquiet of the passions with the ennui that accompanies indolence, they come to regret the tumultuous state with which they were so disgusted. One often mistakenly accuses them of having made a show of false moderation when they left the retired life. However, they acted in good faith; but just as excessive agitation made them wish for complete tranquility, too much leisure made them miss the times when they were always occupied. People are always flightier than they are dissembling and often they are only guilty of inconstancy when they are accused of deceit.

In fact, the state of agitation in which our passions keep us, even during solitude, is so intense that every other state is languorous by comparison. Thus, by instinct, we run after the objects that can excite our passions, though these make impressions on us that often cost us disturbed nights and painful days; but most people suffer more from life without passions than the passions make them suffer.

CHAPTER 2

Of the Attraction of Spectacles That Are Capable of Exciting Profound Emotions in Us. Of Gladiators.

The natural emotion that is automatically aroused in us when we see our fellows in danger or misfortune has no other attraction than that of being a passion whose operations stir the soul and keep it occupied. However, this emotion has charms capable of making it desirable, despite the sad and unwelcome ideas that accompany and follow it. An emotion that reason poorly represses makes some people sprint after objects most able to tear the heart. Crowds go to see a spectacle, the most terrible that people can watch; that is, the torture of another person, condemned by the rigours of the law to the scaffold and put to death by the most frightful torments. Nevertheless, one should foresee, assuming that one did not already know from experience, that the circumstances of torture and the groans of one's fellow man, will make, despite oneself, an enduring impression that will torment one for a long time before being fully erased. But the attraction of the emotion is stronger for many people than the reflections and advice of experience. Everyone in every country flocks to see the horrible spectacles of which I speak.

The same attraction makes us enjoy the anxieties and terrors that caused the dangers to which we see other people exposed, without sharing them ourselves. It is touching, says Lucretius, to watch from the shore a vessel struggle against waves trying to engulf it, or to watch from on high a battle, seeing it while safe from the melee:

> *Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis*
> *e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem; …*
> *suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri*
> *per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.*
> [*On nat.* 2][1]

1 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2.1–2 and 5–6:
How pleasant it is, when windstorms lash
the mighty seas, to gaze out from the land
upon another man in great distress …
It is also sweet to watch great armies,

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_006

The more dangerous the tricks of the reckless ropewalker, the more riveted are ordinary spectators. When he jumps between two sharp swords, if in the heat of his movement his body leaves the line that he must trace, he becomes an object worthy of our curiosity. But put two sticks in place of the swords, or have the acrobat stretch his rope two feet above the grass, and the same jumps and tricks will be in vain. One will not deign to look any longer. The attention of the spectator ceases with the danger.

From whence came the extreme pleasure that the Romans found in the spectacles of the amphitheatre? There, living people were torn apart by ferocious beasts. Troops of gladiators would cut each other's throats in the arena. The Romans even refined the murderous instruments that these unfortunate men had to use to entertain them. It was not an accident that they armed the *retiarius*[2] in one fashion and the *murmillo*[3] in another. They found a balance between the offensive and defensive arms of these *quadrils*[4] that made their battles longer and fuller of incident. They wanted death to happen more slowly and more terribly. Other *quadrils* fought with other arms. They wanted to diversify the types of death of these frequently innocent men. They even nourished them with dishes and foods suitable to keep them healthy so that their blood flowed more slowly from their wounds, and the spectators could enjoy for a longer time the horrors of their agony. The profession of instructing gladiators became an art: the taste that the Romans had for these combats made them seek finesse and introduce elegance into the spectacle that today we would not imagine without horror. It was necessary that the gladiator trainers [Lanistæ][5] who instructed the gladiators showed them not only how to use their weapons; it was necessary also to teach to these unfortunate victims the position in which they should lie down and maintain when they had

---

opposing forces in a war, drawn up
in the field, when you are in no danger.

Titus Lucretius Carus, known as Lucretius (ca. 99–ca. 55 BC), Roman poet and philosopher who followed the sect of Epicureans. His masterful *De Rerum Natura* [On the Nature of Things] is a long poem in six books that describes the origins of the universe and all that is natural in it. Epicureans held that the universe is ultimately composed of nothing other than atoms and void, and that to come to recognize this reality and its implications for human life would result in a life of tranquility (*ataraxia*), rather than suffering.

2 A gladiator armed like a fisherman, with a net, a trident, and a dagger.

3 A gladiator armed with a sword, rectangular shield, an arm guard, a crested helmet, and other gear.

4 Troops or companies of gladiators.

5 A lanista was the trainer or manager of a team of gladiators.

been mortally wounded. These masters taught them, in a manner of speaking, to die with good grace.

This spectacle was not introduced in Rome by means of the vulgarity of the first five centuries that followed its foundation; when the two Brutuses[6] gave the Romans the first gladiatorial combat that they saw in their city, the Romans were already civilized. But the humanity and urbanity of the following centuries, far from giving Romans disgust for the barbarous spectacles of the amphitheatre, made them, on the contrary, more enamoured of them. The Vestal Virgins[7] had their place reserved in the first level of the amphitheatre at the time when the Romans were most urbane and a person was regarded as barbarous if *he branded with a hot iron a slave who had stolen a tablecloth* [Juv. *Sat*. Bk. 14, ch. 22],[8] a crime for which the laws in most Christian countries condemn to death our servants, who are free men. But the Romans felt at the amphitheatre an emotion that they did not find at the circus or the theatre. Gladiatorial combats only ceased in Rome after Christianity became the dominant religion and Constantine the Great banned them by an edict [Cod. Just. Bk. 10, ch. 44, first law].[9] When the combats of which I speak were abolished, five hundred years had elapsed since the Romans had condemned their taste

---

6 Du Bos apparently refers to Decimus Iunius Brutus Scaeva and his brother Marcus Iunius Brutus. According to the Roman historian Livy, they had three pairs of gladiators fight to the death in honour of their deceased father in 264 BC (Livy, *Epitome*, also known as The *Periochiae* 16). Titus Livius, known in English as Livy (64 or 59 BC–AD 17), Roman historian.

7 Priestesses of the goddess Vesta, and responsible for the rituals essential to the security of Rome. They could neither marry nor have children until after their 30-year period of service ended (although few did).

8 Juvenal, *Satires* 14.20–23:

> *Antiphates trepidi laris ac Polyphemus,*
> *tunc felix, quotiens aliquis tortore vocato*
> *uritur ardenti duo propter lintea ferro*?
> He's the Antiphates or Polyphemus of his trembling household,
> Only happy when the torturer has been summoned and someone's
> being scorched with the glowing iron—all because of a couple of towels?

Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, (fl. late-1st and early-2nd century AD), Roman poet.

9 Du Bos gives the reference as *Code of Justinian*, Book 10, Chapter 44, leg. unica. The *Code of Justinian* (which is a collection of rescripts by Roman emperors) is just one part of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which itself is made up of other collections of law texts, but not of laws themselves. Du Bos' reference to *Code of Justinian* 10.44 leg. unica is too general—this chapter contains 7 rescripts, none of them by Constantine, nor is there any reference to the banning of gladiatorial games; in fact Constantine never banned gladiatorial games, he simply forbade people to be sentenced to the arena (*Codex Theodosianus* 15.12.1). The Edict of Constantine or Edict of Milan (AD 313) prescribed toleration of Christians. Constantine I (AD 272–337), Roman emperor from 306–337.

for the spectacles of the arena by forbidding human sacrifice by citizens of the Republic [Plin. *Hist*. Bk. 30, ch. 3].[10]

The attraction of the gladiatorial spectacle made the Greeks like it as soon as they became acquainted with it. They became accustomed to it, though they had not been familiar with its horrors since infancy. The moral principles that the Greeks had attained would not permit them to have any feelings other those of aversion for a spectacle in which, with the aim of amusing the audience, men had their throats slit who often did not deserve death.

During the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes,[11] King of Syria, the arts and sciences, that check human ferocity and which sometimes even enervate their courage, flourished for a long time in all countries inhabited by the Greeks. Some old rituals in funeral games, which could resemble gladiatorial combats, had long since been abolished. Antiochus had planned great projects and was working to realize them: the kind of magnificence that is able to win for sovereigns the goodwill of nations. He acquired from Rome, at great expense, some gladiators, in order to give the Greeks, enamoured of all festivities, a new spectacle. Perhaps he thought that, by assisting at these combats, people would conceive that contempt for life that had made the soldier of the [Roman] legions more determined than the soldier of the [Greek] phalanxes in the wars in which his father Antiochus the Great and Philip, King of Macedonia,[12] had been defeated by the Romans. At first, wrote Livy, the arena only appeared as an object of horror. One imagines what the Greeks, always as ingenious in boasting as in belittling barbarians, could say about the ferocity of other nations. But Antiochus was not put off. In order to accustom, little by little, the people to his new spectacle, the champions fought only until the first blood. Our philosophers [the Greeks] watched these restricted combats with pleasure; but soon, they no longer averted their eyes from combats to the death and they accustomed themselves to see men die only for their amusement. He [Antiochus] even formed a company of gladiators in his country. *Gladiatorum munus, Romanae consuetudinis, primo maiore cum terrore hominum, insuetorum ad tale spectaculum, quam voluptate dedit; deinde saepius dando et modo volneribus tenus, modo sine missione etiam, et familiare oculis gratumque*

10 Pliny, *Natural History* 30.3. Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (61–ca. 113), known as Pliny the Elder, Roman lawyer and author of the encyclopedic *Natural History*.

11 Antiochus IV (ca. 215–164 BC), Hellenistic king of the Seleucid Empire (reigned 175–164 BC).

12 Antiochus III the Great (ca. 241–187 BC), ruler of the Seleucid Empire from 222 BC until his death. He expanded his empire at the expense of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and waged a lengthy war against the Romans before being defeated in 190 BC. Philip V (238–179 BC), King of Macedonia from 221 BC until his death. Philip initially opposed the Romans, but subsequently was allied with them against Antiochus III.

id spectaculum fecit, et armorum studium plerisque iuvenum accendit. Itaque qui primo ab Roma magnis pretiis paratos gladiatores arcersere solitus erat, iam suo … [Livy, Bk. 41.][13]

We have in our vicinity a people[14] so averse to human suffering that they even respect the humanity in the greatest villains. They prefer that criminals often escape the punishment, that the interests of civil society demand that they should undergo, rather than ever allowing an innocent person to be exposed to the torments that judges use in other Christian countries to extract confessions from the accused. The only capital punishment that they permit kills the condemned without making them suffer anything besides death. Yet this people, so respectful of humanity, is infinitely pleased to see animals tear each other apart. They have even made it possible for animals, which nature denied the weapons to mortally wound each other, to kill each other. They have industriously equipped animals with artificial weapons that easily kill. The people of whom I speak even watch with great pleasure men who have been paid to beat each other until they are dangerously injured. One believes that they would have real Roman gladiators if the Bible prohibited a little less positively the shedding of human blood, except in cases of absolute necessity.

One can say the same thing about very refined nations which also profess a religion opposed to the spilling of human blood. Were the festivals dearest to our ancestors, namely tournaments, not spectacles in which the participants really risked their lives? Sometimes the blunted lance killed as well as the lance tipped in iron. France proved this only too well when King Henry II[15] was mortally wounded in one of these festivals. But we have in our history a still stronger proof that shows that the cruellest spectacles have a kind of attraction that makes even the most humane people love them. Fights in a ring between two or several champions were common for a long time among us and the nation's

13 Livy, *History of Rome* 41.20: "A gladiatorial exhibition, after the Roman fashion, he presented which was at first received with greater terror than pleasure on the part of men who were unused to such sights; then by frequent repetitions, by sometimes allowing the fighters to go only as far as wounding one another, sometimes permitting them to fight without giving quarter, he made the sight familiar and even pleasing, and he roused in many of the young men a joy in arms. And so, while at first he had been accustomed to summon gladiators from Rome, procuring them by large fees, finally he could find a sufficient supply at home …"

14 Du Bos refers to the English. Boxing quickly became popular in the late-17th century. The Royal Theatre in London had regular boxing matches as early as 1698. King George I and many noblemen were enthusiastic fans of the sport. Cock fighting was popular in England as early as the 16th century. Metal spurs, called gaffs, were tied to the legs of the animals.

15 King of France (1519–1559), reigned 1547–1559, died of an infected wounded incurred in the course of a jousting tournament held to celebrate a peace treaty.

most distinguished persons drew their swords with a more serious aim than amusing the crowd: to settle their quarrels and kill each other. People flocked, however, to these combats as they did to festivals and the court of Henry II, otherwise so civilized, and abetted the duel between de Jarnac and la Châtaigneraie at Saint-Germain.[16]

Bullfights often cost the combatants their lives. A grenadier in a trench is less exposed to attack than the champions who fight these furious animals. Spaniards of all classes nevertheless demonstrate for these dangerous festivals the same eagerness that Romans had for the festivals of the amphitheatre. Despite the efforts of popes to abolish bullfights, they still continue and Spain, which prides itself on appearing, at least, to obey the popes, has not in this case shown deference to their remonstrances and orders.[17] The attraction of emotion makes the most sophisticated nations forget the elementary principles of humanity and hides from the sincerest Christians the most evident doctrines of their religion.

Everyday a lot of people put a considerable part of their wealth at the mercy of cards and dice, even though they are aware of the evils of playing for high stakes. Men enriched by this means are known all over Europe, as are others who have had unusual adventures. Rich men who have been ruined by gambling are more numerous than healthy people made infirm by doctors. Only fools and knaves are motivated by avarice and the prospect of increasing their wealth by continual winnings. Therefore, so many people are ruined by gambling, not out of avarice, but by the attractions of gaming. In fact, a habitual gambler who is gifted with the ability to calculate an infinity of odds and properly draw the correct consequences can have certain winnings every day and not risk his money in games where success depends more on the ability of the players than on the luck of cards and dice. However, he prefers games where winning entirely depends on the caprice of the dice and cards and in which his ability does not give him superiority over the other players. The reason for a predilection so opposed to his interests is that games whose outcome depends on the ability of the player require more consistent concentration. Moreover, they do not keep the soul in the grip of emotion as do Lansquenet, Basset,[18]

16 10 July 1547 Guy Chabot de Jarnac and François de Vivonne de la Châtaigneraie, French noblemen, fought a judicial duel. Jarnac defeated la Châtaigneraie (who died of his wounds) in this last trial by combat in French history.

17 Pope Pius V (1504–1572), reigned 1566–1572, issued the bull *Super prohibitione agitationis Taurorum et Ferarum* [An injunction prohibiting bullfights and similar sports with wild animals] in 1567. Such fights were condemned as contrary to Christian piety and charity.

18 Gambling games played with cards.

and other games whose outcome depends entirely on chance. In these latter, every play is decisive and each outcome causes some loss or gain. Therefore, they keep the soul in a kind of ecstasy and keep it there without the soul needing to contribute to its pleasure by paying serious attention, which our natural laziness always seeks to avoid. Laziness is a vice that people can sometimes overcome, but it can never be suppressed. Perhaps it is a boon to society that this cannot be uprooted. A lot of people believe that it prevents more evil actions than all of the virtues.

Those who drink too much wine or who yield to other weaknesses are often much more aware of the bad consequences [of their vices] than those who remonstrate with them. But the natural tendency of the soul is to give itself up to everything that occupies it, without going to the trouble of acting with restraint. This is why most people are subject to tastes and inclinations that provide frequent opportunities to be pleasantly occupied by lively and satisfying sensations. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*.[19] In this, people have the same goal, but since they are not built the same, they do not all seek the same pleasures.

19 Virgil, *Eclogues* 2.65: "Each is led by his liking." Publius Vergilius Maro (70–19 BC), among the greatest of ancient Roman poets. He is best known as author of the epic poem, the *Aeneid*, about the founding of Rome.

CHAPTER 3

That the Principal Merit of Poems and Pictures Consists In Imitating the Objects That Would Have Excited Real Passions in Us. The Passions That These Imitations Have Aroused in Us Are Only Superficial.

Since the real and true passions that give the soul its most vibrant sensations have such an unfortunate downside, and the happy moments which bring joy are followed by sad days, why could art not find the means to separate the unpleasantness that follows most of the passions from those that are pleasing? Could art not, so to speak, create a new sort of entity? Could art not produce objects that excite artificial passions capable of occupying us in the moment that we feel them, and incapable of causing in us in the next moment real pains and true afflictions?

Poetry and painting come in here. I do not pretend to hold that the first painters and the first poets, or other artists who could do the same as they do, extended their ideas so far and proposed such refined views in their work. The first inventors of the bath did not dream that it would become a good cure for certain illnesses; they only thought it was a pleasurable refreshment during hot weather, after which it was discovered to be useful for health purposes for certain kinds of illnesses. In the same way, the first poets and the first painters, perhaps, only dreamed of pleasing our senses and imagination. In working toward that purpose they found the means to excite artificial passions in our heart. The most useful social inventions have been discovered fortuitously. Be that as it may, the phantom passions that poetry and painting know how to excite, moving us by the imitations they present to us, satisfy our need to be entertained.

Painters and poets excite these artificial passions in us by presenting imitations of objects capable of exciting *true* passions in us. That is, the impression that these imitations make on us is the same type of impressions that the object imitated by the painter or the poet would have made on us. Also, the impression that the imitation makes is not different from the impression that the object imitated would make, except for the fact that it is less strong. It ought to excite in our soul a passion that resembles what the object imitated would have been able to excite there. The copy of the object should, so to speak, excite in us a copy of the passion that the object would have excited there. But the

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_007

impression that the imitation makes is not as deep as the impression that the object itself would have made, or as serious. This is because the impression an imitation makes does not affect reason; for reason finds no illusion in these experiences, as we will soon explain. Finally, as the impression made by imitation only vividly affects the senses, it immediately fades away. The superficial impression made by an imitation disappears without having a lasting effect, such as the impression made by the object imitated by the painter or poet would have had.

It is easy to grasp the reason for the difference between the impression made by the object itself and the impression made by the imitation. The most perfect imitation has only an artificial existence, it only has a borrowed life, in place of the force and activity of nature found in the imitated object. It is in virtue of the power that nature itself possesses that the real object acts on us.

> *Namque iis quae in exemplum adsumimus, subest natura et vera vis, contra omnis imitatio ficta est …*

says Quintilian [*Instit*. Bk. 10, ch. 2].[1]

That is the source of the pleasure that poetry and painting cause in all people. That is why we happily regard paintings whose merit consists in putting before our eyes fateful stories, which would have produced a feeling of horror had we actually viewed them. As Aristotle says in the *Poetics*, "Of the monsters and dead or dying men that we hate looking at, or that we can only look at with horror, in the works of painters we see them imitated with pleasure. The better they are imitated, the more avidly we look at them" [Ch. 4].[2] The imitations that poetry makes are the same.

Pure pleasure is the pleasure we feel in seeing the imitations that painters and poets make of objects that would in reality have excited disturbing passions

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.2, 11: "The models we choose have their own nature and real force, whereas all imitations is artificial …" Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ca. 35–ca. 100) was a Roman rhetorician. His *Institutio Oratoria* [Institutes of Oratory, or Education of an Orator] is a textbook on rhetoric. For more information on his life and works see Donald C. Stewart, "The Legacy of Quintilian," *English Education* 11.2 (1979), 103–117.

2 Aristotle (384–322 BC), great Greek philosopher, *Poetics* 4.1448b8–12. This passage links the fact that we avidly regard even these horrifying objects to the fact that we have an insatiable desire to learn: "The explanation is to be found in a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g., that the man there is thus-and-so."

in us. Pure pleasure is not followed by the disturbances that serious emotions, which would have been caused by the same object, would have caused.

Some examples will clarify even better than reasons an opinion that I cannot overemphasize. The massacre of the innocents had to leave such horrifying ideas in the imagination of those who witnessed the wild soldiers cutting open infants' throats on the breasts of their bloody mothers. Le Brun's painting, where we see the imitation of this tragic event, moves and softens us, but it does not leave any lingering ideas in our minds. This picture excites our compassion without really distressing us.[3] A death such as the death of Phaedra, a young princess dying while dreadfully convulsing, and accusing herself of atrocious crimes for which she punishes herself with poison, should be something to avoid.[4] It would take a long time to distract ourselves from such dark and dreadful ideas which such a spectacle could not fail to imprint on our imagination. Racine's tragedy, which presents us with the imitation of this event, moves us and touches us without leaving in us the germ of sadness, without being alarmed by the fear that the sadness lasts too long. Yet without making us sad, Racine's piece makes tears flow from our eyes. The affliction is, as it were, only skin deep, and we sense our tears will stop with the performance of the ingenious fiction that makes them flow.

When they speak to us about their misfortunes by means of the painter's brush or the poet's verse, we listen to the unhappiest people with pleasure. But, as Diogenes Laertius remarked, "We would listen to them only with loathing had they displayed their misfortunes before us": *Itaque eos qui lamentationes imitantur libenter, qui autem vere lamentantur, hos sine voluptate audimus*, says the Latin version [in Aristippus].[5] The painter and the poet affect us only as we want. They do not make us love their heroes and their heroines except as we please. Were this not so, had we been struck by the objects themselves that struck the artists, we would not be the masters of the intensity, liveliness, or duration of our sentiments.

---

3 Du Bos refers Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), a French painter. The work mentioned here is a painting called *The Massacre of Innocents* (ca. 1647). It depicts a scene from Matthew 2:16–18.

4 Phaedra is a character in Greek mythology whose story is recounted by many ancient authors, including Euripides and Seneca the Younger. This reference comes from *Phèdre* (1677) by Jean Racine (1639–1699), a French playwright.

5 Diogenes Laertius (fl. 3rd century CE), biographer of Greek philosophers, in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.8.90: "Accordingly we listen with pleasure to those who perform lamentations, but we are pained when we see people lamenting in reality." Aristippus (ca. 435–ca. 356 BCE) was a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle and was a student of Socrates himself. He founded a school of philosophy, the Cyrenaic school, named after Aristippus' birthplace, Cyrene in Ancient Libya.

It is true that young people who are addicted to reading novels, where the attraction consists in artistic imitation, are subject to torment by afflictions and very real desires. But the harms are not necessary consequences of artificial emotion caused by the portrayal of Cyrus and Mandane.[6] This artificial emotion is only the occasion. In the heart of a young woman, who has too much taste for reading novels, it foments her own principles of natural passions and the disposition to conceive passionate and serious feelings for those who are brought to inspire her. Cyrus or Mandane cannot be the cause of those agitations.

Still, we see that people have been seen to lose their minds to the impressions produced by poetry to the point that reason could not regain her rights over their distraught imaginations. We know the story of the inhabitants of Abdera, who were so struck by the tragic images of Euripides' *Andromeda* that the imitation made on them as profound an impression as the imitated object *would have* made: as a result, they lost their minds for a period of time, just as it could be completely lost at the sight of the tragic events.[7] We can cite as well a beautiful thinker from the last century who, greatly moved by the paintings of Astrea, believed himself to be the successor of those garlanded shepherds who never had a country, except in engravings and on tapestries. His altered imagination produced extravagances similar to those Cervantes made happen in a folly of the same genre. However, they were of a different type. Cervantes

6 These are the main characters in the 'roman à clef,' *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* written around 1650 by Madeleine (1607–1701) and Georges de Scudéry (1601–1667). Among other things, the work is remarkable for its sheer length at more than two million words.

7 Euripides (ca. 484–ca. 407 BC), ancient Athenian tragedian, wrote a play called *Andromeda*, which has been long lost. The story to which Du Bos refers is about a beautiful woman named Andromeda, chained to a rock by her father on the ocean shore to be a sacrifice to the god Poseidon. Crying out alone, she is rescued by Perseus, and the rest of the play concerns her love for Perseus and her duty to her parents. The reference to the people of Abdera comes from a report by the ancient writer Lucian (ca. 120–ca. 190). Since Lucian was a known satirist and was known for telling outright lies, this story is probably made up: "They say, my dear Philo, that in the reign of King Lysimachus the people of Abdera were smitten by an epidemic. These were its symptoms: at first every one of them fell ill of a fever, violent and obstinate right from the start; about the seventh day it was broken, in some cases by a copious flow of blood from the nostrils, in others by heavy sweating; but their minds were left in a ridiculous state; they all went mad with tragedy, shouting iambics and creating a din; and they mostly sang solos from Euripides' *Andromeda*, rendering Perseus' speech in song; the city was full of these seventh-day tragedians, all pale and thin, roaring, 'Love, you tyrant of gods and men' and the rest in a loud voice, hour after hour, day after day, until winter and a severe cold spell stopped their noise" (*How to Write History* 1).

imagined that reading about feats of errant chivalry had turned the head of this good gentleman, Don Quixote.[8]

It is very rare to find people who have at the same time a heart so sensitive and a head so weak. Supposing there really are some, their small number does not merit making an exception to this general rule: that our soul remains the mistress of those superficial emotions that poems and pictures excite in it.

We can also think that the delusional shepherd of whom I just spoke would never have taken the panetière[9] nor the crook unless he was used to seeing shepherds every day. True, his passion would not have produced such bizarre effects if, to use an expression, he had never been 'fixated on the chimeras' because reading *Astrae* had so filled his imagination.[10] Just as with the story of Abdera, the real thing is always much less marvelous in the original author than from those who relate it second or third hand. Lucian recounts that many Abderites, having seen the representation of Euripides' *Andromeda* during the fiercest heatwaves of summer, fell ill soon after, and in the grip of fever recited some verses from the tragedy. It was the last thing that had made a profound impression on them. Lucian adds that the winter's cold, whose property is to extinguish epidemic illnesses brought about by summer's intemperance, brought the declamation and illness to a close.

8 The "gentleman" to whom Du Bos refers is Don Quixote, and the full title of this famous work of fiction written by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616) is *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* [The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of la Mancha]. Published in 1605 and 1615, this two-volume novel was, and is, very widely read.

9 A bag in which a shepherd carries bread. Today, a *panatière* is a bread box.

10 Astrea is another figure from Greek mythology, popularized anew in Du Bos' day. The daughter of Astraeus and Eos, Astrea was said to have lived among humans in the Golden Age. See Robert E. Bell, *Women of Classical Mythology: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: 1991), 77. Du Bos' reference is likely to the serialized version of her story written in two parts in 1607 and 1610 by French novelist Honoré D'Urfé (1567–1625), followed again by a third and fourth part in the following two decades. See Bernard Germa, *L'Astrée d'Honoré d'Urfé: sa composition—son influence* (Toulouse: 1904).

CHAPTER 4

Of the Power That Imitations Have Over Us, and of the Ease with Which They Move the Heart.

No one doubts that poems can excite artificial passions in us. But perhaps many people, and even professional painters, will be surprised to hear that paintings, that is, colours applied to a canvas, can excite passions in us. However, this truth can only surprise those who have not paid attention to what happens inside them. Can one see Poussin's painting of the death of Germanicus without feeling compassion for this prince and his family and indignation against Tiberius?[1] The Graces in the Luxembourg Gallery and many other paintings would not have been defaced if their owners had seen them without emotion.[2] Not all paintings are of the type of which Aristotle spoke when he said that, "some pictures are as capable of redeeming vicious men as the principles given by moral philosophy" [*Polit. Bk.* 5].[3] Would people with a delicate constitution have in

1 Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), prominent French exponent of the neo-classical style. He spent virtually all of his career in Rome. Poussin treats this subject in *The Death of Germanicus* (1627). Germanicus (15 BC–AD 19) was a General in the early Roman Empire. He had immediate family connections to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and eventually took on the name Germanicus Julius Caesar. Tiberius, whom ancient sources speculated to have murdered him, was his uncle. His wife, Agrippina the Elder, was the great-niece of the first emperor of Rome, Augustus. Germanicus was highly regarded and valued by the Romans. According to Tacitus in *The Annals* 1.33: "He was indeed a young man of unaspiring temper, and of wonderful kindliness, contrasting strongly with the proud and mysterious reserve that marked the conversation and the features of Tiberius." Stories about Germanicus also appear in Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*, since Germanicus was Caligula's father. According to Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 2.1: "Now the belief was that he met his death through the wiles of Tiberius, aided and abetted by Gnaeus Piso. This man had been made governor of Syria at about that time, and realising that he must give offence either to the father or the son, as if there was no alternative, he never ceased to show the bitterest enmity toward Germanicus in word and deed, even after the latter fell ill."

2 In 1621, Maria de' Medici, widow of Henry IV, commissioned Peter Paul Rubens to paint twenty-four paintings for her newly built residence, the Luxembourg Palace. These paintings depict events from Maria's life. The third in the series is *The Education of Maria de' Medici*. The Three Graces preside over her education. (In Greek mythology the Graces were minor deities of such things as charm, beauty, and creativity.) The Graces, as is traditional, were depicted without clothing. An unknown painter subsequently painted clothing on the Graces. This clothing has since been removed. See Charles Paul Landon, *Annales du Musée et de l'Ecole Moderne des Beaux-Arts*, 5 (Paris: 1803), 57–58.

3 Aristotle does not actually say this in *Politics* 5.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_008

their rooms pictures that depict hideous figures, such as *Prometheus Attached to a Rock* by Michelangelo da Caravaggio?[4] The imitation of a hideous object makes an impression almost as great as the object itself would have made. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus[5] tells the story of a courtesan who, in a place where she had not come to engage in serious reflection, happened to cast her eyes on a portrait of Polemon,[6] a philosopher famous for miraculously reforming his life. The courtesan reformed on seeing this portrait. Cedrenus[7] tells of a picture of the Last Judgement contributing greatly to the conversion of a Bulgarian King. Rulers of every era have always made use of paintings and statues the better to inspire the religious and political sentiments they want to give people.

These things have always made a huge impression on people, mainly in countries where people commonly have lively sentiments, such as the sunny regions of Europe and the coasts of Asia and Africa that face these regions. Recall the prohibition in Jewish law against painting and sculpting human figures: they made an excessive impression on a people whose characters incline them to be impassioned by all objects capable of moving them.

In some Protestant countries Reform has been a pretext for banning statues and pictures from churches. The governments of these countries do not neglect to use the power, that painting naturally has over people, to keep people respectful of the law. One sees, above the posters on which the laws are written, pictures representing the tortures to which lawbreakers would be condemned. This country is full of political observers who extend their attention to very many things one would not deign to notice in other countries. Our observers have remarked that these pictures were able to give, at least to children, who must one day become adults, more fear of the punishments prescribed by law. In the republic of which I speak, children are taught to read books appropriate to their age and yet filled with representations of events from the history of their country. These representations are to inspire children with aversion to the power of Europe that, at the time, is most suspected by the republic. If the balance of powers in Europe changes, they produce a new book, and substitute the power that has come to threaten the state for the one that they have ceased to fear.

---

4 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), one of the great painters of the baroque period. In Greek mythology, Prometheus steals fire from the gods and gives it to people. In punishment, he is tied to a rock and each day an eagle eats his liver (which is regenerated each night). A harrowing painting, attributed to Caravaggio, depicts this punishment.

5 St. Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329–389), philosopher, theologian, and Archbishop of Constantinople.

6 Polemon of Athens (d. ca. 270 BC), third successor to Plato as head of the Academy.

7 George Kedrenos, also known as Cedrenus (fl. 12th century), Byzantine historian.

Quintilian's profession was to teach people the art of moving others by means of the power of words, but he equated the power of painting with the power of the art of oratory. *Sic in intimos*, he said, speaking of painting, *penetret adfectus, ut ipsam vim dicendi nonnumquam superare videatur* [*Instit*. 11.3].[8] The same author relates that he has sometimes seen prosecutors display in court a picture of the crime for which they seek justice. They did so more effectively to arouse in the judges indignation against the guilty party. They called painting to the assistance of the art of oratory at a time when this art was in its perfection. *Et ipse aliquando vidi, depictam ira tabula sipariove imaginem rei, cuius atrocitate iudex erat commovendus* [*Instit*. Bk. 6.2].[9]

When one pays attention to the natural sensibility of the human heart, to its disposition to be easily moved by the objects that painters and poets imitate, one is not surprised that poems and pictures agitate it. Nature has implanted in the heart this quick and easy sensibility as the primary foundation of society. The love of self, that becomes almost always an immoderate *amour propre* in proportion to a person's age, makes people become too attached to their present interests and too harsh towards others, when they make decisions impassionately. People ought to be easily taken from this state. Consequently, nature decided to construct us in such a way that everyone that we approach has a powerful effect on us so that those who need our consideration or assistance can easily affect us. They obtain from us, in our tender state, what they could never obtain by reason and belief. The tears of a stranger move us even before we know what makes him cry. The cries of a man, to whom we are linked only by our common humanity, automatically and without deliberation make us fly to his assistance. Someone who approaches us with joy painted on his face arouses joy in us before we are told the cause of his joy:

> *Ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adlent*
> *humani voltus*
> [Horace, *Art of Poet.*][10]

8 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.67: "when a picture, a silent work of art in an unvarying attitude, can penetrate our innermost feelings to such an extent that it seems sometimes to be more powerful than speech itself."

9 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.1.32: "and which indeed I have occasionally witnessed, of bringing into court a picture of the crime painted on wood or canvas, that the judge might be stirred to fury by the horror of the sight."

10 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 101–102: "As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep."

Why do actors who declaim with true passion not cease to move and please us even if they make serious mistakes? It is because people who are themselves touched touch us without difficulty. The actors of whom I speak are truly moved, and that gives them the right to move us. But they are not capable of expressing passions with nobility or suitable correctness. Nature, whose voice they hear, compensates for their errors. They do what they can; nature does the rest.

Of all talents that carry sway over other people, the most powerful is not superiority of mind and knowledge. Rather, it is the talent to move at will and this consists principally in appearing to be moved and suffused with the emotion that one wants to inspire. It is the talent of being like Catiline, *cuius rei lubet simulator*,[11] that one can call, if one likes, the talent of being a great actor.

The English who are best informed about the history of their country do not speak of Oliver Cromwell[12] with as much admiration as the bulk of their countrymen do. They deny him the extensive, penetrating, and superior genius that he is accorded by many people. They credit him only with the courage of a private soldier and with knowing how to appear to feel the sentiments that he affected, and also how to arouse the passions in others that he truly seemed to have. Thurloe,[13] they say, from time to time explained to him, as one explains to a woman that one wants to act an important role, which people need to be won over, and how to work on them, to achieve some goal. Oliver then spoke to them so passionately that he won them over. Europe was surprised to see him turn to his advantage the event that, one would have thought, must end in his downfall, and on the basis of this success credited him with several virtues that he did not have. Thus his reputation was established. The most illustrious minister that France had in the last century, some of his contemporaries remarked, was something like Cromwell in this respect.[14]

When we are in one of those rooms where several players are seated around different tables, what secret instinct makes us take a place among the players who risk the highest stakes, even though their play is not as worthy of our curiosity as that at some other tables? What attraction brings us back to them

11 Du Bos refers to Lucius Sergius Catilina (108–62 BC), a Roman senator best known for conspiring to overthrow the Roman republic. He quotes part of a sentence from the Roman historian Sallust's *Catilinae Coniuratio* [Conspiracy of Catiline] 5.4: "capable of any simulation."

12 Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), a leader of the Parliamentary armies in the English Civil War and Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1650 until his death. See John Morrill, *Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: 2007).

13 John Thurloe (1616–1668), secretary of state and spymaster in Cromwell's government.

14 Du Bos presumably refers to Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), Louis XIII's chief minister.

after a feeling of curiosity has made us check what sort of luck is to be had at the neighbouring tables? The emotions of the other players move us; those who play for the highest stakes move us most because they are most moved themselves.

Finally, it is easy to conceive how the imitations that painting and poetry give us are capable of moving us when one reflects that a seashell, a flower, a medallion on which time has left only traces of letters and shapes, excite strong and disquieting passions: desire to see them and envy of their possessor. The igniting of a great passion by the smallest of objects is an everyday event. Nothing is surprising in our passions except a long duration.

CHAPTER 5

That Plato Banished the Poets from the Republic because of the Great Impression That Their Imitations Are Capable of Making.

According to Plato, the impression that imitations make on us in certain circumstances is strong, and consequently dangerous. This led to his decision never to suffer poetic imitation, or poetry properly speaking, in this ideal Republic, whose constitution he rules with so much pleasure. He fears that the paintings and the imitations that are the essence of poetry should not have a big effect on the imagination of his favoured people, whom he vividly imagined to have a nature as sensitive as his Greek compatriots. "The poets," Plato says, "never allow themselves to describe to us the tranquility of a wise man's inner self, someone who always maintains equanimity of spirit as proof of his pains and his pleasures. They do not use their talent for fiction to depict a situation to us of a man who suffers with constancy the loss of his only son" [*Rep*. Bk. 10, p. 604, ed. Serranus].[1] In their plays, they do not include characters whose reason rules the passions. Poets are not wrong on this point. A Stoic would play a very dull role in a tragedy. "The poets that intend to move us," (it is Plato who takes over the writing), "present a wide variety of objects. In their poems they introduce men freed from their violent desires, men made prey to all agitations of the passions, or who at least resist assistance."[2] Poets know very well that an

1 In Du Bos' text, the quotation ends here with a reference to the edition of Plato's *Republic*, Book X by Jean de Serres (1540–1598), French historian, humanist and poet, who published under the Latin translation of his name, Joannes Serranus. Serranus' facing-page Latin translation of Plato's dialogues accompanied the Greek edition of Henri Estienne (Henricus Stephanus, ca. 1528–1598): Plato, *Platonis opera quae extant omnia* (Geneva: 1578) vol. 2. Du Bos presents a rough paraphrase of Plato's text, which suggests he is reciting it from memory. The passage is *Republic* X, 603c–e: "Mimetic poetry, we say, imitates human beings acting under compulsion or voluntarily, and as a result of their actions supposing themselves to have fared well or ill and in all this feeling either grief or joy. Did we find anything else but this? 'Nothing.' … our soul at any one moment teems with countless such self-contradictions. 'Rightly,' he said. Yes, rightly, said I. But what we then omitted must now, I think, be set forth. 'What is that?' he said. When a good and reasonable man experiences such a stroke of fortune as the loss of a son or anything else he holds most dear, we said, I believe, then too, that he will bear it more easily than the other sort."

2 The precise reference to Plato's *Republic* 10 is unknown. However, this might be Du Bos' paraphrase of 605c–606b, which catalogues the wide range of emotions depicted by poets.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_009

actor's agitation gives us pleasure in understanding the dialogue. As a result, they write off characters as soon as it is decided whether they will be happy or unhappy, as soon as their fate is fixed. But, on Plato's view, poetry stimulates the habit of giving oneself over to passion, even artificial passions, which debilitates our spirited soul, dragging us down toward appetitive emotions. It throws into disorder what Plato wanted to establish in the actions of the person who, according to him, should be ruled by reason, not governed by the appetites of the sensitive soul.[3]

Plato criticizes another drawback of poetry: by putting themselves in the place of vicious men whose sentiments they want to express, poets eventually contract the vicious habits they spent all their time imitating [*Rep*. 3, p. 396].[4] It is too hard to believe that their minds would not become corrupted by entertaining ideas that occupy corrupt men. *Frequens imitatio*, which is said following Quintilian in speaking of comic writers, *transit in mores* [*Inst. Or*. 3.11].[5]

Plato draws on experience to provide reasons for the terrible effects of poetry [*Rep*. bk. 10, p. 607].[6] Having confessed that it is often too easy to be seduced by poetry's charms, he compares the pain he feels in giving up Homer to the pain of a lover who is forced, after much struggle, to leave an overly controlling mistress. He calls Homer the poet *par excellence* and the first of his kind. If

3 According to Plato, human beings are rational animals with a tripartite soul, or tripartite principle of life: the rational, the spirited and the appetitive soul. Each soul is responsible for governing the activities of the relevant part of the human. The appetitive soul is responsible for our appetites, such as our desires for physical pleasures and for avoiding pains. The spirited part of the soul is responsible for our emotional appetites, such as anger and toughness. Both the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul pull on us, sometimes in completely different directions. The rational soul, *nous*, is responsible for thinking, analyzing, and seeking the truth, and ultimately this part of the soul should govern all the others. See Plato, *Republic* 4.440a–442c.

4 Plato, *Republic* 3.395b–d: "If, then, we are to maintain our original principle, that our guardians, released from all other crafts, are to be expert craftsmen of civic liberty, and pursue nothing else that does not conduce to this, it would not be fitting for these to do nor yet to imitate anything else. But if they imitate they should from childhood up imitate what is appropriate to them—men, that is, who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind; but things unbecoming the free man they should neither do nor be clever at imitating, nor yet any other shameful thing, lest from the imitation they imbibe the reality."

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.11.2. "Frequent imitation develops into habit."

6 Plato, *Republic* 10.595b–c: "Why, between ourselves—for you will not betray me to the tragic poets and all other imitators—that kind of art seems to be a corruption of the mind of all listeners who do not possess, as an antidote a knowledge of its real nature. 'What is your idea in saying this?' he said. I must speak out though a certain love and reverence for Homer that has possessed me from a boy would stay me from speaking."

Plato excludes the poets from his Republic, it is obvious he only exiles them for the same reason that motivates preachers who preach against theatrical performances, wanting to exile those citizens who overindulge their fellow citizens from Athens.

These are the motives that made Plato proscribe the part of poetic art that consists in painting and in imitating. But he agrees to keep in his Republic the part of art that teaches the construction of verse and the composition of metre. This is the part of art frequently called 'versification,' and that we sometimes call 'mechanical reflections on poetry.' Fairly enough, Plato also values the part of poetic art that makes speech more elevated and more agreeable to the ear, by introducing metre and harmony into its phrases, which he prefers to the cadence of prose.[7] According to him, when put into verse, praises of gods and heroes become more delightful and memorable. Plato's goal is to preserve in his state parts of art that are nearly incapable of causing harm, and for this reason he proscribes those that seem to him too dangerous. Although banishing from his Republic those modes of ancient music whose sweet and effeminate songs he finds suspicious, he preserves other modes if the songs do not appear dangerous to him.

It is possible to reply to Plato that art that is simultaneously necessary and useful in society should not be banned, since it can only become harmful in the hands of those who would abuse it. In a state, one need only proscribe arts that are useless and dangerous in themselves, and to take precautions for preventing useful arts from becoming harmful. Plato himself does not prevent the cultivation of wine on the hills of his Republic, even though an excess of wine brings about great disorders, and even though the attraction of this liquor often entices people to drink more than they need.

The good use of invention and imitation made by poets is sufficient to show that it is not a useless art in society. Since it is also appropriate to portray actions that give rise to thoughts of virtue, rather than actions which only strengthen corrupt inclinations, it is required only that they are put to good use. The depiction of virtuous actions stirs up our souls. Somehow it elevates and excites in us praiseworthy passions, such as love for country and glory. Practicing these passions makes us highly capable of feats of virtue and courage, which reason alone could not do. In effect, such onerous duties are often required by the good

7 It is fitting that Plato would express a preference for metre and harmony, two important elements of his metaphysics. Cadence is a vocal modulation or inflection that adds musicality. Plato's preference is for the formal, not decorative, aspects of poetry. See Plato, *Republic* 3.400a–e.

of society, such that it is good that passions provide the power for engaging a citizen to perform those duties. In the end, a good poet can adapt his depictions of vices and passions so that his readers come to love wisdom and virtue even more. And now that is enough on this subject, although, as we will see in what follows, many French poets could not assert the sort of control over people that Plato worried about. Our nature is not as lively, or as sensitive, as that of the Athenians.

But Plato raises another objection against the value of poetry: poets are nothing but imitators and copyists of the works and productions of other artists. According to Plato the poet who describes a temple is a mere copyist of the architect who built it.[8] I agree with this, and I would much rather be, for example, the architect who built the Church of Saint Peter in Rome than the poet who made a pretty description of it in verse. I also maintain that there would be more value in finding the proportions that make a ship an excellent vessel than to describe the speed of its travel over the vast plains of the sea. But is it often the case that there is less value in being the originator than in being the imitator? Is there not more value in having depicted an old book, as Boileau did, than to have bound and printed it?

> *A ces mots, il saisit un vieil Infortiat.*
> *Grossi des visions d'Accurse et d'Alciat.*
> *Inutile ramas de gothique écriture,*
> *Dont quatre ais mal unis formaient la couverture.*
> *Entouré à demi d'un vieux parchemin noir,*
> *Où pendait à trois clous un reste de fermoir.*
> [Boil. *Lutrin*. Chant. 5][9]

8 Plato, *Republic* 10.597e–598c: "Very good; the producer of the product three removes from nature you call the imitator? 'By all means,' he said. This, then, will apply to the maker of tragedies also, if he is an imitator and is in his nature three removes from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators. 'It would seem so.' We are in agreement, then, about the imitator. But tell me now this about the painter. Do you think that what he tries to imitate is in each case that thing itself in nature or the works of the craftsmen? 'The works of the craftsmen,' he said. … Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom."

9 Boileau, *Lutrin* Canto 5.203–209.
With this, He Fox's *Book of Martyrs* chose.
Four ill-joyn'd Boards the Coverture compose,
Burrow'd by Worms, and Edg'd with Iron round;
And with an Old black Sheep-skin half way bound.
No Silken Tyes it had, but at each Hasp

Here the copyist comes out better than the original. Moreover, how many things do poets imitate that are not the handwork of human beings, such as thunder and other meteorological events—in a word, all of nature, the work of the Creator? But this reasoning would turn into a philosophical discussion if we were to remain on the subject for too long. Let us be content to say that the society that would exclude all citizens for whom art would be harmful would immediately become the abode of boredom.

Hung by three Nails a Remnant of a Clasp.
Firm as it Stood upon the bending Shelf,
No Humane Force cou'd Stir it, but Himself.

Boileau, *Boileau's Lutrin: A Mock-Heroic Poem*, trans. Nicholas Rowe (London: 1708), 101–102.

CHAPTER 6

Of the Nature of the Subjects That Painters and Poets Treat. That They Should Not Choose Subjects That Are Too Engaging.

The main attraction of poetry and painting, the power that they have to move and please us, comes from the imitations that they can make of objects that can engage us. Consequently, the greatest misjudgement that painting or poetry can make is to take as the main object of imitation something in nature to which we are indifferent or to employ their art to represent actions to which we would pay only passing attention if we really saw them. How could we be touched by a copy of something incapable of affecting us? How could we be interested in a picture representing a peasant leading two beasts of burden along a path if the action imitated cannot engage us? Verses, that describe experiences we have had without taking much interest, will engage us even less. The imitation always stirs us less than does the object imitated: *Quidquid alteri simile est, necesse est minus sit eo quod imitatur* [Quintil. *Instit*. Bk 10.2].[1] Therefore, the imitation would not move us when the thing imitated is not capable of doing so. Teniers,[2] Wouwerman,[3] and other painters of this type have represented subjects that have not received our careful attention. Nothing in the events of a village feast or the ordinary diversions of a troop of guards can move us. It follows that the imitation of these objects can amuse us for a short time, that it can make us admire the knack the craftsman has for imitation, but it would not touch us. We praise the painter's art for imitating well, but we blame him for having chosen for the object of his work subjects that engage us so little.

The most beautiful landscape, were it by Titian[4] or Carracci,[5] would not engage us more than a savage or agreeable stretch of country. Nothing in such

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.2.11: "Whatever resembles another object, is bound to be less than what it imitates."

2 Du Bos likely refers to David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690), Flemish painter, who is known for his landscapes and paintings of carousing peasants.

3 Philips Wouwerman (1619–1668), Dutch painter of landscapes, hunting scenes and battles.

4 Tiziano Vecelli or Vecello, known in English as Titian (ca. 1490–1576), the most important 16th-century representative of the Venetian school of painting. He was known for his use of colour.

5 Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), important Italian painter and a progenitor of the baroque style.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_010

a picture entertains us, so to speak, and since it scarcely touches us, it does not really attract us. Intelligent painters have so well known, have so strongly felt this truth, that only rarely have they painted landscapes that are deserted and without figures. They have included people, they have introduced into their paintings several characters whose actions were capable of moving us and, consequently, attracting us. This is the practice of Poussin, Rubens,[6] and other great masters. They have not been content to put in their landscapes a man walking along a path or even a woman carrying fruits to market. They normally put in figures who think, in order to give us reason to think. They put in people agitated by passion so as to arouse ours and to attract us by means of this agitation. Indeed, we speak more often of the figures in these paintings than of their terraces and trees. The landscape that Poussin painted several times, and which is usually called *Arcadia*, would not be so highly praised if it were without figures.

Who has not heard tell of this famous country, imagined to have been for a time the idyll of the happiest inhabitants that any land has ever supported? People always occupied by their pleasures, who knew no worries other than the woes that romances attribute to these imaginary shepherds, whose condition we meant are to envy. The picture I mentioned[7] represents a panorama of a smiling country. In the middle we see a memorial to a young girl, dead in the flower of her youth. We recognize it from the statue of this girl, reclining on the tomb after the manner of the ancients. The sepulchral inscription is only four words of Latin: Even in Arcadia I am: *Et in Arcadia ego*. But this short inscription causes the most serious reflections in two youths and two young girls wreathed in garlands of flowers, who appear to have encountered this sad monument in a place where they did not expect to find a distressing object. One of them points, drawing the others' attention to the inscription. One can still see on their faces, through the affliction that seizes them, the remains of an expiring joy. We imagine hearing these young people reflect on death, that spares neither age nor beauty, and from which the happiest climes provide no asylum. One imagines the affecting words they will utter, once they have recovered from the initial shock, and one applies these words to oneself and to those with whom one is concerned.

What has been said of painting applies to poetry, and poetry's imitations of nature touch us only in proportion to how much impressions of the thing imitated would move us, if we had really seen them. A tale in verse, however well told it may be, will make no one laugh unless its subject is pleasing in itself.

6 Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), celebrated Flemish painter in the baroque style.

7 As Du Bos indicates, Poussin painted more than one version of this painting. The second version of *Et in Arcadia ego* (1637–1638) is currently in the Louvre.

At best I can praise as well-written a satire that does not cast light on a truth already dimly felt, or contain maxims worthy of instantly becoming proverbs, due to the important messages that they succinctly express. I retain nothing of it and I have little desire to praise or re-read it. No matter how well written and charmingly rhymed an epigram may be, it will grip no one if is not lively and its subject not one we hear about with pleasure, even when it is described in prose. A dramatist, who put his characters in situations so unengaging that I would actually see my acquaintances in them without being moved, scarcely engages my interest in his characters. How would the imitation touch me if the original cannot?

CHAPTER 7

That Tragedy Affects Us More Than Comedy because of the Nature of the Subjects That It Treats.

When we reflect that tragedy affects us, that it draws in more people than comedy, it is impossible to doubt that the imitations engage us only to the degree that the object imitated engages us. Certainly people who in general are not moved by the theatre do not engage with the production of comedies as they do during tragic ones. Those who are amused by dramatic poetry speak more often and with more affection of the tragedies, than of the comedies, that they have seen. They know more lines of the works of Corneille[1] and Racine than they do of Molière.[2] In the end, we suffer the mediocre more willingly in the genre of tragedy than in the genre of comedy, which does not seem to have the same pull on our attention as the former. Horace said:

> *Habet Comoedia tanto*
> *plus oneris, quanto veniae minus.*
> [First bk., *Epistle* 1][3]

All those who work in theatre say the same, and they swear that it is less risky to entertain the public in a show that makes them cry than in one that makes them laugh.

It seems, meanwhile, that comedy sticks more with people than tragedy does. A comic poet does not depict heroes or characters that spectators have known only through vague imaginary ideas formed on the basis of stories. They did not entertain the audience with conspiracies against the State, or with oracles or other marvellous happenings. Like most spectators who have never taken part in these sorts of events, they would not know if the circumstances and their outcomes are presented realistically. On the contrary, the comic poet depicts our friends, and people with whom we live every day. According to Plato

1 Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), important French dramatist.

2 Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, whose stage name was Molière (1622–1673), one of the most distinguished playwrights and actors of his era.

3 Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.169–170: "Comedy calls for less labour, but in truth it carries a heavier burden."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_011

[In *Phil.* p. 48],[4] theatre only exists due to the faults that befall humans, because they do not know themselves well. Some imagine themselves to be more powerful than they are, others more pure, and others again more likeable.

The tragic poet exposes us to the pitfalls caused by self-ignorance among monarchs and other powerful people who can exact piercing vengeance, for whom animosity is naturally violent, and for whom the portrayal of suitable passions can be given in place of great events. The comic poet exposes us to passions that follow from self-ignorance among common people, where animosity is constrained by law, and where passions suitable for the stage only *confuse*, in a word, ordinary projects and events.

The comic poet entertains us with stories of our peers and presents us with portraits wherein we see their everyday eccentricities. If you will pardon me the expression, the poet puts the audience on stage. People are always keen to engage in the ridicule of others, and naturally desire to get hold of insights that permit them to think less of others. They should therefore better find their truck with Thalia[5] than with Melpomene.[6] Thalia is much more giving than Melpomene in providing us useful information. If comedy does not correct all the faults she plays with, she at least teaches us how to live with other people who are subject to those faults, and how it is possible to try to avoid an obstacle that irritates them, or the low complaisance that flatters them. On the contrary, tragedy represents heroes to whom our situation is scarcely comparable. Their lessons and their examples turn on events so little similar to our own that we could only vaguely and imperfectly apply them to our lives.

But comedy, following Aristotle's definition [*Poetics*, ch. 5],[7] imitates the ridicule of humans, and tragedy, following the definition of that word [*Vet. Etym. Graec*],[8] is the imitation of the life and words of heroes, or of humans who have become tragic protagonists by the rise of extremely violent passions. It is the imitation of crimes and misfortunes of great men as if they were the

4 Du Bos gives the Stephanus page number. Plato discusses the stage beginning at *Philebus* 48, but does not quite say what Du Bos says he does.

5 Thalia is the muse that governs Comedy in Greek mythology. She is the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne and is one of nine ancient muses. Thalia carries the comic mask in her hand and is always depicted in a light manner garlanded with ivy.

6 Another of the nine muses, Melpomene is the muse of Tragedy. Like her sister, she also carries a mask, but it is the mask of Tragedy. She is usually depicted with a weapon in her hand.

7 Aristotle, *Poetics* 5.1448a: "It is just in this respect that tragedy differs from comedy. The latter sets out to represent people as worse than they are today, the former as better."

8 '*Vet.*' is short for '*Veteris*', Latin for old. In the 1755 edition, 'Vet' is misprinted as 'Vit.' It is correct in other editions. Du Bos apparently refers to the 'old' *Magnum etymologicum Graecae linguae* (Venice: 1549).

most sublime virtues of which they are capable. The tragic poet makes us see people fall prey to the most extreme and agitated passions. There are unjust but all-powerful gods who demand that we cut the throat of a young innocent princess at the feet of their altars. It is Pompey the Great,[9] the conqueror of many nations and the terror of the kings of the Orient, massacred by his lowly slaves. We do not recognize our friends among the characters of tragic poetry. But their passions are more impetuous, and like the laws, are only a very weak check on the passions. They have many other consequences than the passions of the characters of comic poetry. Passions such as fear and pity, which the depiction of tragic events stirs up in our souls, draws us in more than the levity and scorn of comic incidents.

9 Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106–48 BC), Roman general in the late Roman Republic. Due to his great military success, he was given the cognomen 'the Great.'

CHAPTER 8

Different Genres of Poetry and Their Characters.

All genres of poetry are the same. The essence of each is to paint and depict an object, and each genre touches us to the extent that the object can move us. This is why elegiac and bucolic poetry[1] attract us more than didactic poetry. Thus, "*les vers que soupiroit Tibulle et l'amour lui dictoit*," to adopt the expression of the author of *The Art of Poetry*,[2] please us infinitely every time we re-read them. Ovid charms us in those of his elegies in which he has not substituted his own wit for the language of nature.[3] No one ever puts down the *Eclogues* of Virgil[4] from the distaste that comes from satiety. They are still a delicate pleasure when they have nothing new to offer us, and our memories run ahead of our eyes as we read. These two genres of poetry tell us of sensitive people and we would be very affected by their pains and pleasures, were they to tell us of themselves.

Epigrams, which are good only as plays on words, or for their ingenious allusions, scarcely please us when they are new for us. The initial surprise strikes us, but abates once we have grasped the sense. But epigrams that depict objects capable of gripping us, or attracting close attention in any other way, always leave an impression on us. We re-read them several times and a lot of people remember them without ever intending to learn them. Leaving modern poets to one side, Martial's best known epigrams are not those in which he has played on a word, but epigrams depicting objects capable of engaging us a lot. An example is Martial's epigram about Arria, the wife of Paetus.[5]

---

1 Elegiac poetry includes poetical elegies and poetry expressive of sadness. Also known as pastoral poetry, bucolic poetry provides idealized depictions of the lives of shepherds and shepherdesses.

2 An adaptation of Boileau, *The Art of Poetry* (1674), 54. The line actually reads, *Qu'Amour dictoit les vers que soupiroit Tibulle* ("Love dictated the verses sighed by Tibullus"). Albius Tibullus (ca. 55–19 BC), known in English as Tibullus, Latin poet and elegist.

3 Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC–AD 17/18), a Roman poet.

4 An eclogue is a type of poem used by Latin poets concerned with pastoral or rural life. This was a genre popularized by Virgil and had many imitators in the later ancient Latin period.

5 Martial, *Epigrams* 1.13: "When virtuous Arria was handing her Paetus the sword she had drawn from her own flesh, she said: 'I swear the wound I have dealt does not hurt, but the wound you will deal, Paetus, that hurts me.'" Paetus was suspected of a plot against the Emperor Claudius and ordered to kill himself. When he hesitated, Arria is supposed to have stabbed herself and handed him the knife. Marcus Valerius Martialis, known in English as Martial (ca. AD 40–ca. 104), Roman epigrammist.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_012

Sensible authors who have written didactic poems, and use verse to teach us lessons, have followed the principle that I have stated. In order to keep the attention of the reader, they have sown their verse with images depicting touching objects. For objects that are only able to satisfy our curiosity do not attract us as much as those that can affect us. If I may say so, the mind is a worse companion than the heart.

CHAPTER 9

How to Render Didactic Subjects Engaging.

When Virgil composed his didactic poem called *The Georgics*, whose title promises us instructions on agriculture and on the jobs of rural life, he took care to fill it with imitations of objects to which we are naturally drawn. Throughout the whole work, Virgil is not satisfied with open-ended images drawn from all of art. In one of these books he inserts a dissertation made on the occasion of solar eclipses, and he treats it with all the poetic inventiveness possible: the murder of Julius Caesar, and the beginnings of the reign of Augustus. One would not be able to entertain the Romans with subjects that were of no interest to them. In another book, Virgil included the miraculous myth of Aristaeus,[1] and a depiction of the effects of love. In another, there is a picture of rural life which forms a smiling landscape filled with the friendliest figures. In the end, he adds the tragic story of Orpheus and Eurydice,[2] capable of bringing us to tears, like those who actually witnessed it. These images truly are the cause of what pleases us so much when reading the *Georgics*, such that our attention neglects the verses that contain the lessons promised by the title. Suppose, as well, a didactic poem presents to us a topic so intriguing that we could read it once with pleasure, but we would not re-read it with the same satisfaction as one would re-read an eclogue. The mind would not be able to enjoy twice the pleasure of hearing the same thing, but the heart can enjoy twice the pleasure of feeling the same emotion. The pleasure of hearing is consummated by the pleasure of understanding.

1 Aristaeus is a rural deity of Greek antiquity. According to Apollonious of Rhodes (fl. ca. 3rd century BC), Greek epic poet best known for his work the *Argonautica*, Aristaeus is associated with sheep, hunting, healing, and prophecy. He is credited with the discovery of olive oil and honey. In Virgil's *Georgics* (4.315–558), he is portrayed as being responsible for the death of his bees, which was a consequence of his responsibility for the death of Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus. See also Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10.1–147; 11.1–66.

2 The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is told in a variety of versions, including in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Orpheus, a magnificent lyre-player, fell in love with Eurydice, and they soon planned to marry. At their wedding, Hymen, who presided over the nuptials, prophesized that the union would be unsuccessful. Soon after a shepherd, Aristaeus, caught sight of Eurydice and lustfully pursued her. Eurydice escaped but, bitten by a snake, died. Orpheus charmed his way to the underworld with his lyre to find her and was allowed to take her back to earth if he could exit Hades without glancing at her. Orpheus could not help himself and, after the single look, Eurydice was gone forever. Orpheus grieved by playing his lyre, which moved everyone who heard it.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_013

Didactic poems, which their authors sometimes stooped to embellish with pictures full of *pathos*, are rarely in the hands of common people. What value these poems have comes down to the fact that we regard the lesson as a serious task, not as a pleasure. They are the least preferred, and the public barely remembers the verses containing these depictions, similar to those with which Virgil enriched his *Georgics*. Everyone admires the genius and verve of Lucretius, the energy of his expressions, the bold manner in which he depicts his objects (which the paint brush of poetry never seems to do), and, finally, his dexterity for putting things into verse, which perhaps Virgil himself had wanted to put into words *in the languages of the gods*. But Lucretius is more greatly admired than read. There is more to gain from his poem *On the Nature of Things*, although it is filled entirely with bad reasoning, than in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[3] Meanwhile, everyone reads and re-reads Virgil, and few people make Lucretius their favorite book. One only reads his work by deliberate decision. It is never, as is the case with the *Aeneid*, one of those books with an invisible attraction that draws your hand when you want to read for an hour or two. When we compare the number of translations of Lucretius with the number of translations of Virgil in all modern languages, one will find four translations of the *Aeneid* for every translation of the poem *On the Nature of Things*. People always prefer books that move them to books that teach them. Since their boredom is more pressing than their ignorance, they prefer the pleasure of being moved to the pleasure of being instructed.

3 Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* had a deep influence on subsequent Latin poets, including on Virgil in both his *Aeneid* and *Georgics*.

CHAPTER 10

Objection Drawn from Paintings to Show That the Art of Imitation Is More Engaging Than the Subject Imitated.

One could object that we see some pictures that imitate only various objects that would not engage us if we saw them in nature, but which hold our attention for a long time. We give more attention to fruits and animals represented in a picture than we would give to the objects themselves. The copy engages us more than the original.

I respond that, when we study pictures of this type, our attention is not mainly directed towards the object imitated, but towards the art of the imitator. The object attracts our attention less than the skill of the artist: we do not give more attention to the object imitated in the picture than we give it in nature. These pictures are not studied for as long as those in which the merit of the subject is equal to the merit of the execution. One does not study for as long the flower baskets of Baptiste[1] or a village feast by Teniers as one studies the *Seven Sacraments* by Poussin[2] or another history painting, executed with as much deftness as Baptiste and Teniers display in their work. A history painting as well painted as a troop of guards by Teniers would engage us more than the troop of guards.

One must always suppose, as reason demands, that each work was equally successful, since it is not sufficient that the pictures be by the same hand. For example, one views with more pleasure a village feast by Teniers than one of his history paintings, but this proves nothing. Everyone knows that Teniers was as completely unsuccessful in his serious works as he was highly successful in his comic works.

Thus, when we distinguish the attention paid to the technique from that given to the object imitated, we will always find that I have grounds for proposing that the imitation never makes more of an impression on us than imitated

1 Du Bos refers, perhaps, to Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay (1653–1715), a French painter who specialized in flowers or Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1636–1699), Franco-Flemish painter who also specialized in flower pieces.

2 In 1637, Poussin was commissioned to paint two series of paintings depicting the seven sacraments (baptism, ordination, confirmation, penance, eucharist, marriage, and extreme unction).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_014

object does. This is true even when speaking of pictures that are valuable only in virtue of their [skillful] execution.

The technique of painting is so delicate, and strikes us by means of a sense whose sway over our souls is so great, that a picture can please us merely by the attractions of its execution, independently of the object that it represents. But, as I have already said, we then only attend to and esteem the technique of the imitator who knows how to please us without touching us. We admire the brush that knew how to counterfeit nature so well. We study how the artist has contrived to deceive our eyes, to the point where we take colours applied to a surface to be real fruits. A painter can, therefore, pass for a great artist, that is, as an elegant draughtsman or a colourist who rivals nature, without knowing how to use his talents to represent touching objects or to put into his pictures the soul and *vraisemblance* that we feel in those of Raphael[3] and Poussin.

The pictures of the Lombard School are admired, though these painters have often limited themselves to entertaining the eyes by the richness and exactness of their colours, without thinking, perhaps, that their art was capable of affecting us. Their most zealous adherents agree that one great beauty is lacking in pictures of this school and that Titian, for example, would be even more esteemed if he had always treated touching subjects and if he had joined more often the talents of his school with those of the Roman school.[4] Consider this great painter's representation of St. Peter Martyr, the Dominican friar, killed by the Vaudois.[5] It is not, perhaps, the most valuable for richness of colour, though it is very good even by that standard. However, the Cavalier Ridolfi [p. 151],[6] historian of the Venetian school of painters, states that this painting is the best known and most praised. The events represented in this picture are interesting and Titian has treated them with great *vraisemblance* and with a more considered expressiveness than is found in his other works.

3 Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, usually known in English as Raphael (1483–1520), one of the greatest Italian Renaissance painters.

4 The Roman school initially included the students of Raphael. The Roman school also includes the Mannerism that grew out of the work of Michelangelo. The classicism of Poussin, Claude Lorrain and others is also central to the Roman school.

5 Titian's *Death of St. Peter Martyr* (ca. 1527) was considered one his greatest works. It was the altarpiece at the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, in Venice. It was destroyed by fire in 1867 during a botched restoration. It depicted the death of St. Peter of Verona (1206–1252), a Dominican preacher and Inquisitor of Lombardy who was murdered by assassins hired by Cathars, also known as Vaudois, whom he had been persecuting.

6 Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell' Arte: ovvero Le vite degli Illustri Pittori Veneti and dello Stato* (Venice: 1648). Carlo Ridolfi (1594–1658), Italian painter and writer.

CHAPTER 11

That the Beauty of Execution Does Not Alone Render a Poem a Good Work, as It Makes a Picture a Precious Work.

Poets who have no other merit than to excel in versification, who do not know how to depict any object capable of moving us, but who, to use an expression from Horace, put nothing on the paper except for *harmonious silliness*,[1] are like the painters about whom I spoke. The public ignores the works of a poet who has talent for succeeding only in the technique of his art. At the same time, we would be wrong to accuse the public of harshness towards the poets and indulgence towards the painters. Being a good colourist and elegant designer and being a great arranger and rhymer of words are completely different things. Moreover, there is no imitation of nature in the compositions of the simple versifier. Even worse, as I will explain later in this work, it is very difficult for French verse to do a good job imitating the sound described by the meaning of these verses, in order to improve the reputation of a poet incapable of anything else. Rhyme imitates no natural beauty. But, as I will go on to say, there is a precious imitation of nature in the pictures of the painter who only knows how to colour well. We find in them the flesh of humans, and we recognize in their landscapes the different effects of light and the natural colours of all objects.

Since the principal value of poems and paintings consists in representing objects capable of engaging and moving us, if we really see them, it is easy to conceive how the choice of subject is important for both painters and poets. They could not find them more engaging.

> *Cui lecta potenter erit res*
> *Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.*
> [Horace, *Art of Poet.*][2]

1 Horace, *Epistles* 1.12.19: *Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors* ("What is the meaning and what are the effects of Nature's jarring harmony").

2 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 40–44: "Whoever shall choose a theme within his range, neither speech will fail him, nor clearness of order."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_015

CHAPTER 12

That a Work Engages Us in Two Ways: As a Person in General and as a Certain Person in Particular.

A subject can be engaging in two ways. In the first place, because it is engaging in itself and its characteristics are such as must touch people in general. In the second place, it is engaging only in relation to certain people. That is to say, though its subject is only capable of engaging a modicum of interest in most people, it very greatly engages the attention of particular people. For example, a portrait is rather unengaging for people who do not know the person it depicts, but this portrait is precious to those who love the person of which it is the portrait. Verses expressive of sentiments similar to our own, and representative of a situation in which we find ourselves, or even a situation in which we have been at another time, have a particular attraction for us. The principal events in the history of a certain people are a subject of more interest to that people than it to another nation. The subject of the *Aeneid* was more engaging for the Romans than it is for us. The subject of *The Maid, or France Rescued*[1] is more engaging for us than it is for Italians. I will say no more of the interest that comes from a close relationship and which is peculiar to certain people at certain times, especially since painters and poets can easily determine whether the subjects that they undertake to treat are very interesting to their intended audience.

I will be content, therefore, to make two observations on this subject. The first is that it is very difficult for a poem of significant length, and not supported by passionate declamation or the trappings of the theatre, to succeed if it does not have a subject that engages both interests. That is, a subject capable of touching all people and that can still please the compatriots of the author in particular, because it speaks of things that interest them the most. We read a poem to be entertained, not to be instructed, and we quit reading when it has nothing to engage us. It is nearly impossible for the genius of poetry to be suffi-

1 Jean Chapelain (1595–1674), French poet, a founder of the Académie française, and author of *La Pucelle, ou la France délivrée, poème héroïque* [The Maid, or France Rescued] (1656), which tells of the defeat of England by the French led by Joan of Arc (ca. 1412–1431), whose nickname was "The Maid of Orléans." Despite Chapelain's public and respected role as one of the founding members of the Académie française, this poem was subject to intense criticism, most notably by Boileau.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_016

ciently productive of beauties, and for the poet to diversify them with enough variety, to hold our attention and, so to speak, to capture the mind during the reading of an epic poem. Attempting simultaneously to excite and satisfy our curiosity is too risky. The attempt to make us love people, to whom we are completely indifferent, with enough affection for us to be moved by all of their successes and setbacks, is too risky. The poet does well to avail himself of every inclination and passion that is already in us, especially those that are specific to us as citizens of a particular country or some other place. The poet who would make Henry IV[2] the subject of an epic poem would find us already inclined towards his hero and his subject. Perhaps, his art would have been exhausted in vain before he had interested us in an ancient hero or a foreign prince as much as we already are interested in our best king.

The interest an object has in relation to particular people excites our curiosity, disposes us to tenderness, and engages us at least as much as the interest it has for people in general. The imitation of things that interest us, as citizens of a certain country, or as adherents of a certain party, rightly has great power over us. How many partisan books owe their initial popularity to the fact that people, attached to the cause for which the books speak, take a particular interest in them? True, the public soon forgets books that have no other merit than that of capturing certain popular trends. In order to last, a book must have depth. Even if a book has depth and pleases people in general, the interest it has for particular people can make it popular in the short term. A good book, by catering to this interest, is a quicker and greater success. In addition, enduring particular interests can acquire for a book the close attention of a great number of people in several eras. Such is the interest that a nation takes in a poem that describes the principal events of its history, and which speaks of cities, rivers, and buildings that are constantly before their eyes. This particular interest would have made Chapelain's *The Maid, or France Rescued* successful, even if it had only been mediocre.

True, all European nations still read Virgil's *Aeneid* with endless pleasure, although the things that this poem describes are no longer to be seen, and people no longer take the same interest in the foundation of the Roman empire as Virgil's contemporaries, the most prominent of whom claimed to be descended from the heroes of whom he sang. The feasts, battles, and places of which Virgil

2 Henry IV, given the epithet 'the good,' (1553–1610), King of France. Henry ended the Wars of Religion in France when he abjured the Protestant faith in which he had been raised and became a member of the Church of Rome. Probably not coincidentally, Voltaire's *Henriade* (begun in 1717 and published in 1723) takes Henry as its subject. See the Introduction Section 4 for a comment on this matter.

speaks are only known to many of his readers by Virgil's own account. But the *Aeneid*, the most accomplished work of poetry ever written has, so to speak, some means to make its fortune. Although this poem only touches us because we are people, it still touches us enough to engage us. But a poet who intends his works to be as successful and touching as the *Aeneid* without addressing the particular intimate interests of the reader has, at least, a great deal of presumption, especially if he writes in French. I will attempt to develop this point at greater length in the course of this work.

My second observation will be on the injustice of occasional reckless judgements to the effect that the ancients lied about the enormous success of certain works. These judgements are made because people do not pay attention to the particular interest that the ancients took in the works they praised so much. For example, those who are astonished that Caesar was so disconcerted when he heard Cicero's oration *For Ligarius*[3] that he forgot himself and involuntarily dropped the papers that he held in his hands. Those who say, after having read this oration, that they are still at a loss to see the passage that was capable of so profoundly striking a man such as Caesar, speak like grammarians who have studied human language but have no knowledge of the passions of the human heart. Put yourself in Caesar's place and you will find this passage without difficulty. You will soon see how the victor at Pharsalus[4] who, on the battlefield, embraced his defeated enemy as a compatriot, could be so touched by Cicero's depiction of this event that he forgot that he was seated on a tribunal.

Let us return to the general interest and the subjects in which it is found, by which it is able to touch everyone. Painters and poets, I have already said, should only treat such subjects. True, these artists know how to adorn their subjects; they can make subjects interesting that are normally devoid of interest. However, there are several problems with treating subjects that owe their capacity to move entirely to the creativity of the artist. A painter, and especially a poet, who treats an uninteresting subject has only two ways to overcome sterility and insert passion into the mundane actions that he imitates. He can embellish these actions with incidents or change the principal circumstances. If the poet chooses to embellish his action with incidents, the interest that we

3 Quintus Ligarius was a member of a conspiracy to assassinate Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), a prominent Roman general and politician. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), important Roman orator, statesman and philosopher, so effectively defended Ligarius that he was acquitted. *For Ligarius* is the record of Cicero's defence.

4 The Battle of Pharsalus, fought 9 August 48 BC, in which Caesar decisively defeated his rival, Pompey the Great. After the battle, Caesar pardoned many of his rivals and allowed them to resume their public positions.

take in the incidents will only reveal the stiffness of the principal action, and we reproach him for having failed to live up to his title. If the poet changes the principal circumstances of the action, which we must suppose to be generally known events, his poem ceases to be *vraisemblable*. A fact will not appear *vraisemblable* to us when we are informed of the contrary by trustworthy testimony. This will be discussed in more detail when we come to see that not all sorts of fiction are permitted in poetry, any more than is the case with painting.

Thus, painters and poets ought seriously to consider whether the action that they have chosen to treat would materially touch us, if we saw it, bearing in mind that imitation of the action will affect us much less. They should not rely solely on their own judgement in making a decision so crucial to the success of their works. Before they become enamoured of their subjects and, before they, in a manner of speaking, become wedded to their characters, they should consult their friends. This is the time when they can receive the most useful advice. It is very unwise to wait to ask for advice about a building until it is already under construction and one can no longer do anything to change the basic plan without tearing down half of what is already built.

CHAPTER 13

That There Are Subjects Especially Suitable for Poetry, and Others Especially Suitable for Painting. The Means of Recognizing Them.

When one wants to treat something in poetic verse, not only should the subject of imitation be interesting in itself, but it must also be a suitable choice for the poet. There are subjects better suited for painters than for poets, just as there are subjects better suited for poets than for painters. This is what I am undertaking to explain, after having taken what is, with your pardon, a bit longer with this discussion. It seems to me that we should be expansive in order to be more intelligible.

A poet can say more things to us than a painter can make us understand. A poet is able to explain more of our thoughts and more of our feelings than a painter can render, because poets are not focused on any particular movement that is especially noticeable in our attitude, or precisely characterized on our face. What Cornelia said to Caesar, on discovering the conspiracy that would kill him in an hour,

L'exemple que tu dois périroit avec toi[1]

could not be rendered by a painter. The painter could, by giving Cornelia a countenance that suited her situation and her character, provide some idea of these sentiments, and make us aware that she speaks with great dignity. But the thoughts of this Roman woman could never be given by the stroke of a paintbrush. She wants the death of the oppressor of the Republic to be an agony capable of terrifying those who wanted to attack freedom, and not merely a detestable crime. A pictorial expression cannot articulate, so to speak, the words of the eldest of the Horatii, when he responded to those who asked what his son could do by himself against three combatants:

Qu'il mourût.[2]

1 Corneille, *The Death of Pompey* 4.4.1420: "The example that you owe would perish with you." Cornelia Cinna Minor (ca. 97– 69 BC) was the wife of Gaius Julius Caesar. She is depicted in Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* 1.1 and Suetonius' *Life of Julius Caesar* 1.6.

2 "He could die." The story of these brothers derives from Livy, *History of Rome* 1.24–25. Livy

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_017

A painter could make it obvious that a man is moved by a certain passion, but this is not depicted in the action. This is because every passion of the soul is, at the same time, a passion of the body. The experience of anger is unique, varying according to a person's character, the circumstances giving rise to it, and what it says of the sublime[3] regarding a person's circumstances. Consequently, only rarely can a painter express the emotion with enough lucidity to be understood.

For example, in his painting of the death of Germanicus,[4] le Poussin[5] was able to express all sorts of heartache felt by Germanicus' family and his friends when he died in their arms from being poisoned. But it would not be possible to give an adequate, moving account of the final sentiments of this Prince. A poet can do it: he can make him say, "I would be in my rights to pity myself for a death as premature as mine if it were happening to me naturally. But I am dying from being poisoned. May you avenge my death, and never shy away from making yourselves informers to obtain it. Public compassion will be on the side of my accusers in equal measure." A painter would not know how to express most of these sentiments; in any scene, he cannot paint even *one* of the sentiments that can possibly be expressed. To make us understand Germanicus' notion that Tiberius was the author of his death, the artist could make Germanicus be shown a statue of Tiberius by his wife Agrippina, with a gesture

---

relates the story of the Horatii, three brothers in the ancient Roman army who were evenly matched with the three Curiatii, who were brothers in the Alban army. They proposed a combat between them, and a treaty was signed ensuring that the winner's homeland would take control of the other. One of the three Horatii brothers was victorious.

3 In *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694), vol. 1, 'sublime' is defined as follows: "SUBLIME, adj. de tout genre. Haut, relevé. Il n'y a d'usage que dans les choses morales ou qui regardent l'esprit. *Estre dans un degré sublime. C'est un homme d'un merite sublime.*" ("SUBLIME, adjective of all types. High, noble. The only use is in moral concerns, or what has to do with the spirit/soul. *Is in a sublime degree. It is a man with sublime merit.*") Throughout the 18th century, a new usage of 'sublime' comes into effect, which more closely approximates contemporary use of the term. In the *Dictionaire Critique de la Langue Française* (1787), volume 3: "SUBLIME, adj. ... On ne le dit guère des persones: on dit, *une pensée sublime, un discours sublime*, mais non pas, *un homme, un Dieu sublime*." ("SUBLIME, adjective. .... It should not be said of people: we say, *a sublime thought, a sublime discussion*, but not *a sublime man, a sublime God*.") By the end of the century, 'sublime' is expressly not applied to people, and it loses its moral connotation. See Introduction to this volume, pp. 69 ff.

4 See Book One, Chapter Four above.

5 *The Death of Germanicus* (1627) shows Germanicus on his deathbed surrounded by Roman soldiers, friends and family members. Du Bos has used this painting as an example for good reason: the painting is a model for its depiction of extreme anguish, sorrow and mourning by family and friends, with the flourish of Stoic restraint amongst the gathered soldiers. Du Bos explains below why he puts the definite article 'le' in front of Poussin's surname.

and a look on his face that would be appropriate to characterize this sentiment. However, this would require the painter to use the whole painting for the purpose of expressing that single sentiment.

Since the painting that represents an action can only produce a snapshot of its duration, the painter can never attain the sublime that the things which preceded the present situation sometimes throw into an ordinary feeling. In contrast, poetry describes all of the remarkable incidents of the action that it treats. What was presented often throws some marvellous dimension into quite an ordinary thing that is subsequently said or presented. This is how poetry can use this marvelous dimension that emerges from these circumstances, and which we can call sublime, if we want, but this sublimity is owed to the relations between incidents. Such is the sally of the misanthrope.[6] He gives a serious account of the reasons that prevent him from establishing himself at court, after enumerating the significant and annoying troubles, that one spares oneself by not living there:

> *On n'a point à louer les vers de messieurs tels.*[7]

This thought becomes sublime because of the known character of the person who speaks, and the court case that he will endure,[8] for having said that bad poetry is worth nothing.

Without comparison, it is even easier for the poet rather than the painter to affect us by these characters, and to make us take great interest in what happens to them. Exterior qualities, like beauty, youth, majesty, and sweetness that the painter is able to give to his characters, would motivate our interest in their futures as much as the virtues and the qualities of the soul that the poet can give to his. A poet can also make us as sensitive to the misfortunes of a prince, of whom we have heard nothing, as to the misfortunes of Germanicus, by means of the great and amiable character that he gives to the unknown heroes he wants to make dear to us. That is just what a painter does not know how to do: in order to move us, he is reduced to serving up characters that we already know, and his great value is to make us recognize these characters with accuracy and ease. How masterfully le Poussin was able to make us recognize with such spirit Agrippina in his painting of Germanicus' death. After having treated

---

6 *The Misanthrope* is the best-known work of Molière. It is written in verse and is a comedy of manners that succeeds in satirizing 17th-century French society.

7 Molière, *The Misanthrope* 3.7: "One does not have to praise the verses of such men." This line is given by Alceste, the main character and title figure of the play.

8 Reading "vient à essuyer" for "vient d'essuyer."

the different types of emotions of the other characters in the painting in terms of passions they could express, he placed a woman at the side of Germanicus' bed, ennobled by her height and her clothing, who holds her face in her own hands, and in which her entire attitude marks a pain most profound. Without being ourselves upset, we see that the emotions of this character should surpass all of the others, since this great Master so desired to represent it as drawn from a troubled soul. Those who know that Germanicus had a wife particularly attached to him, and who received his last breaths, would recognize Agrippina as certainly as collectors of antiquities recognize her by her hairstyle and the tilt of her head on medallions depicting this princess.[9] If Poussin is not the inventor of this poetic trope, which he could well have borrowed from the Greek who painted Agamemnon with his face veiled at the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia,[10] this trope is always a masterpiece of painting. I always say 'le Poussin,' in conformity with established usage, though using the 'the' that accompanies illustrious Italian men can give the impression that le Poussin was Italian. Nicolas Poussin, which was his name, was from Andeli in Normandy.

Again and again I am astonished at painters who take such great interest in making us recognize and be moved by the characters they use. They face many difficulties to make them recognizable with only the aid of their paintbrush. They could simply accompany their historical paintings with a short inscription. Three quarters of spectators are not otherwise capable of guessing the subject of the painting and doing justice to the work. Sometimes, for them, a beautiful figure pleases them, but it speaks a language that they do not understand. Looking at that figure, they become immediately bored, because if their minds are not engaged, they do not experience pleasure for long.

The sense of Gothic painters, as crude as they were, made them understand the usefulness of inscriptions for making their paintings' subjects intelligible. True, they made use of a trick as primitive as their paintbrushes in order to effect this intention. As a bizarre safeguard, they created scrolls that roll out of the mouths of their figures, on which they wrote whatever they wanted to make these inert figures say; this is how they made their figures speak. These

9 Du Bos is referring to the depictions of Agrippina stamped into metal coins, which would be recognizable to an expert antiquarian or collector.

10 Agamemnon was the King of Mycenae in Greek literature. Iphigenia was his eldest daughter. Agamemnon's army, which had moved into action in response to Agamemnon's wife having been abducted by Paris, had angered the goddess Artemis, and so according to some versions of this story, Artemis ordered Iphigenia's sacrifice. (Other versions have Iphigenia transformed into a deer.) Versions of this story are given by Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, by Euripides and Sophocles in their commonly titled works *Electra*, and by Aeschylus in *Agamemnon*, among others.

very scrolls were abandoned along with the Gothic taste, but sometimes Great Masters have considered the addition of two or three words required for understanding the subject of their works. They have even not forborne to write on the surface of their painting, somewhere where they are not spoiled. Raphael and Carracci used them this way. Coypel[11] placed stretches of Virgil's poetry in the Gallery of the Palais-Royal to help viewers understand the subjects that he had taken from the *Aeneid*. Already painters were beginning to sense the usefulness of these inscriptions when engraving these works, and they put these markings at the bottom after completing their paintings.

The poet is more successful than the painter in imitating his object. The poet uses many features to express the passion and sentiment of just one of his characters. If some of these features miscarry, if they do not precisely make his point, if they do not render exactly the entire idea that he wants to express, other more fortunate features can be used in place of the originals. Taken together, they can achieve what one alone cannot do, and they can express the poet's idea in all its force. Not all the features that Homer uses to depict Achilles' impetuosity are equally strong; but the moral weaknesses are rendered stronger by contrast with others, which in turn give them more energy. All the features that Molière employs to sketch his Misanthrope are not equally charming, but some of them add to the others; and taken all together, they form the best designed character and the most perfect portrait that has ever been created for the theatre. This is not the case for the painter, who paints each of his characters only one at a time, and who can use but a single feature to express a single passion on each of the appropriate parts of the face. If he does not execute well the feature that expresses the passion; if, for example, when he paints the shape of the lips, their contour is not precisely the line that he wanted to draw, the painter's idea miscarries. The character, instead of expressing a passion, only grimaces. What the painter does best in the other parts of the face allows us to excuse the badly designed mouth, but it does not make up for the defective feature. He tries to correct the mistake in vain; he begins anew without making it better. It is the same as with those who are searching their memories for a forgotten name: the painter finds everything *but* the feature that would have been able to form the expression he wanted to imitate. Thus, though there are

11 Antoine Coypel (1661–1722), French painter of historical and religious subjects. The reference here is to Coypel's major project, undertaken for the Palais-Royal, of large-format paintings of Virgil's *Aeneid*. This style of painting, known as 'history painting,' takes great moments in history, literature, and Christian scripture as the themes to be depicted. See Simon Lee, "Antoine Coypel's 'Aeneas in the Underworld': An Unpublished Drawing," *Master Drawings* 21.3 (1983), 283–285.

characters that a painter cannot express, practically speaking, there is nothing that a poet is incapable of copying. We will see also that it is rather the beautiful things in nature that the painter copies most easily, and of which he makes more moving imitations than the poet.

Everyone grieves, cries, and laughs; everyone feels passions; but the same passions have different characteristics in different people. Passions are varied, even in the characters who, following the artist's suggestion, must take an equal interest in the principal action in the painting. Age, nationality, temperament, sex, and profession make a difference in how the same sentiment is manifested. The grief of those who see the sacrifice of Iphigenia comes from the same feeling of compassion; and yet this emotion must manifest itself differently in each viewer, following whatever observations we will go on to make. But the poet does not know how to make this palpable diversity in his verses. If he does so on the stage, it is with the help of declamation, and with the aid of the actors' performances.

We easily see how a painter varies according to age, sex, nationality, profession, and temperament the pain of those who witnessed the death of Germanicus. But we cannot ever see how an epic poet, for example, would by the end of his poem add this variety without cluttering up his descriptions and making his work tiresome. He might begin with a boring description of the age, temperament, or even the clothing of the characters that he wants to introduce into his main action. We should never forgive such a laundry list: if he makes this lengthy list in his first books, the reader will not remember them, and will not be sensitive to the beauty that can only be grasped if one has not forgotten the list. If he runs through all these descriptions just before the poem's climax, there will be an unbearable delay in the action. Furthermore, poetry lacks the right expressions to teach us about most of these circumstances. Even with the help of his technical terminology, a physiologist could not give a good description of the temperament and character of each spectator. To make all its details understood with ease and clarity, they need to be shown to the eyes.

On the contrary, nothing comes more easily to an intelligent painter than making us aware of the age, temperament, sex, profession, and nationality of his characters. The painter uses clothing, skin colour, beard and hair, with their lengths and their thickness, natural shape, posture, countenance, shape of the head, physiognomy, the fire, movement, and colour of the eyes, and many other things that make a character recognizable by sentiment. Nature has placed in us the instinct to discern human character more quickly and extensively than can reflection upon the indicators and signs of those characters. This diversity of expression marvellously imitates nature, which, notwithstanding its uniformity, always characterizes each subject in a particular way. Where I do not find

this diversity, I no longer see nature and I see it as art. A painting in which multiple heads and expressions are exactly alike was never made by imitating nature.

Regarding the technique of his art, nothing stops the painter from giving expression a particular character. It often happens that the painter, working like a poet suggests to himself, qua colourist and draughtsman, beauties that he would have never encountered if he lacked poetic ideas to express. One invention, in effect, leads to another. Some examples will make this point easier to understand.

Everyone knows the painting by Raphael in which Christ confers the authority of the keys upon Saint Peter in the presence of the other apostles.[12] It is one of the pieces of hanging tapestry of the Acts of the Apostles that Pope Leo X commissioned for the Sistine Chapel,[13] and whose cartoons[14] are conserved in the Gallery of the Palace that Queen Mary brought to Hampton Court.[15] Holding the keys, Saint Peter kneels before Christ, and he appears permeated with an emotion suited to the situation: his recognition and zeal for his master are obvious on his face. Represented as the youth that he was, Saint John the Evangelist is depicted with the actions of a young man: he applauds, with frank movement so natural for his age, the worthy choice that his master made, and appears that

12 The "*clefs de S. Pierre*," or the Keys of Saint Peter, is a reference to the special authority granted to Peter by Christ: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The keys symbolize the authority to govern the Church. While there are many depictions of this scene, the most famous is the great fresco panel in the Sistine Chapel entitled, *Giving of the Keys to St. Peter*, by Italian Renaissance painter Pietro Perugino (1446–1523), who was Raphael's teacher. Du Bos, however, here refers to Raphael's depiction of the scene on tapestry, commissioned by Pope Leo X, called *Christ's Charge to Peter*.

13 Du Bos calls the Sistine Chapel "the Chapel of Sixtus the IVth." Pope Sixtus IV (1414–1484) ordered the building of the Sistine Chapel.

14 Cartoons are pieces of heavy paper or pasteboard. They were used by fresco-makers to serve as designs for the weavers of the tapestries. The cartoons to which Du Bos refers are known as the 'Raphael Cartoons,' which now belong to the British Royal Collection. These are large-scale drawings and would have been known to anyone in the 17th and 18th centuries who knew anything about art or Christianity. They are currently displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

15 Mary Stuart, or Princess Mary (1631–1660), was married to Prince William II and was the daughter of the reigning monarch King Charles I (1600–1649). There is no evidence that Mary herself purchased the cartoons, but rather her father apparently did so on the advice of Rubens. See Richard Cattermole, *The Book of Raphael's Cartoons* (London: 1845); Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny, *Raphael* (New Haven: 1983).

he made himself. The liveliness of his approval is clearly indicated by the turn of his face and by a very expressive movement of his body. The Apostle who is nearest to him seems older, and shows the physiognomy and countenance of a man who is poised: also, in conformity with his character, he applauds by a simple movement of arms and head. One makes out at the edge of the group a bilious and sanguine man;[16] he has a ruddy face with a beard falling in curls, a large forehead, a flat nose, and all the traits of a haughty man. With knit brows he regards Saint Peter with disdain, the choice of whom we easily surmise that he finds unjust. Men of this temperament openly believe they are not less valuable than others. Near to him is another Apostle with a confused look on his face: we see that he has a melancholic temperament from the thinness of his livid face, from his black beard and hair, from his posture: in the end all the traits that naturalist scientists[17] have assigned to this temperament. He is doubled over, and with his eyes firmly fixed on Christ, he is devoured by a gloomy jealousy for a choice which displeases him, and for which he will preserve a bitter resentment for a long time. In short, we recognize him as Judas, as distinctly as if we had seen him hanging from a fig tree with a purse around his neck.

I have not yet spoken about Raphael's genius. I doubt it would be possible to push artistic invention further than this great painter did in the pictures of his best days. Another piece of hanging tapestry represents Saint Paul informing the Athenians that they had made an altar to God without knowing him. Raphael transformed this Apostle's speech into a masterpiece of poetry, confining himself to the limits of the most exact *vraisemblance*.[18] A Cynic leaning on his cane, and whom one can recognize by his surliness and tattered clothing that signal the character of Diogenes' sect, looks at Saint Paul with impu-

16 These are descriptors based on the ancient theory of the four humours, or temperaments. According to this pseudo-psychological theory, a person's personality was determined by the balance of humours—specifically, the fluids of blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile—in their bodies and could be changed by adjusting the amounts of those humours. A sanguine personality is one that is both social and optimistic. See Noga Arikha, *Passion and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: 2009).

17 By "naturalist scientists" (*Naturalistes*), Du Bos refers to the natural philosophers, whose remit included the subjects of proto- and early science, including the four humour theory.

18 This is Raphael's *St. Paul Preaching in Athens* (1515–1516), which takes as its subject-matter Acts 17:16–34. According to this account, Paul engaged in debate with Jews, "God-fearing Greeks," Epicurean, and Stoic philosophers about Jesus and the resurrection. He was accused of advocating for foreign gods. This scene is well-known for the fact that, while Paul was not successful in converting many people, his words did attract Dionysius the Areopagite. This painting is currently at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

dence.[19] Another philosopher whom we recognize by the tilt of his head as a firm and obstinate man, has his chin on his chest; he is absorbed in reflection on the marvels that he grasps, and it appears in this very moment he begins to change his mind. Another has his head resting on his right shoulder, and he regards the Apostle with pure admiration, not troubled by any other sentiment. Another puts the second finger of his right hand on his nose, and gestures like a man clarifying some truths about a confused idea he had long held. The painter juxtaposes these philosophers with young men and women who indicate their surprise and their emotion by gestures appropriate to their age and sex. Chagrin is painted on the face of one man dressed as a Jewish lawyer. The success of Saint Paul's prediction should produce a parallel effect on an obstinate Jew. The fear of going on and on prevents me from speaking further of the characters of this picture, but none fail to clearly reveal their sentiments to an attentive spectator.

I shall put forward another example. The topic is sufficiently important for this. I will take the example from Coypel's *Susanna*,[20] a picture highly praised from the moment it was first taken off the easel. Susanna strikes a sympathetic pose, accused of adultery, and the painter represents her before the people in the exact moment where two old men were making allegations against her. From the physiognomy of Susanna, the look on her face so serene despite her emotions, one easily recognizes that if she were to lower her eyes, it would be from modesty, not guilt. The nobility and the dignity of her face strongly testify for her that we clearly see that her first inclination would have been immediately to absolve anyone else displaying a similar countenance. The painter varied the temperament of the famous old men; one appears sanguine, the other bilious and melancholic. The latter, following the character proper to his temperament, which is obstinance, steadfastly accuses her. We see only fury and rage on his face. The sanguine man appears to soften, and we clearly see that, despite his comportment, he already feels remorse, which will make him hesitate in his resolution. Such is the character of men of this temperament. So violent for vengeance, they are not tough enough to see the fruits of their vengeance without being moved by compassion.

After what I just explained it is easy to conclude that painting happily treats subjects when it can introduce a large number of characters into the action. This is true of the examples of which we have been speaking, for example the murder of Caesar, the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and many others that would be

19 Diogenes the Cynic (412 or 404–323 BC), a founder of cynic philosophy. Cynics believed that the good life consists in living simply and in accordance with nature.

20 The full title of this painting by Antoine Coypel is *Susanna Accused of Adultery* (1695–1696). It is currently in the Prado Museum.

needless to point out. The emotion of those present sufficiently binds them to an action and, from there, this action motivates them. The emotion of those present makes them, to put it in other words, actors in a scene, rather than simple spectators in a poem. For example, a poet who treats the sacrifice of the daughter of Jephthah could only allow a few very involved actors to take part in the action. Actors who are not essential to the action, in which they are made to play a role, are cold to the extreme in poetry. The painter, on the contrary, can bring as many spectators into the action as he judges suitable. We do not ask any more than that they appear touched.

But poetry cannot take advantage of such a large number of actors. We will go on to say that a character who does not have more than a modest interest in the action becomes boring. If he has greater involvement, the poem needs to decide upon the fate of that actor. The poem needs to teach us about him. The great number of actors that the tragic poet sometimes uses in order to conceal a poem's sterility will eventually become very bothersome for him when the dénoument approaches and he then must get rid of them. The poet makes these characters get rid of themselves by stabbing or by poison on the first pretext he can imagine:

L'un meurt vuide de sang, l'autre plein de séné.

This is one of the verses of Boileau,[21] which we can easily apply to these characters, even though he did not write it for them. There is no demand made of the deceased person; he is carried off and buried. But this bloody outcome, which turns the tragic scene into a battlefield, confronts the viewer with many unrealistic deaths. It is not the quantity of blood that is shed; it is the manner in which it is told that makes the character of the tragedy. Excessive tragedy leaves us cold, and we are rather brought to laughter than tears at a poet who tries to induce *pathos* by writing about blood. Some malign character comes to demand of him the list of his dead.

Carrying on with the comparison between drama and painting, we find again that painting has the advantage of putting before our eyes actions suitable for making a great impression on us. Drama allows us to see Brutus and Cassius plunging the sword into Caesar's heart, and the priest thrusting the knife into Iphigenia's heart. The tragic poet dares to present us with events such

21 Boileau, *Art of Poetry* 4.6: "The one died drained of blood, the other full of senna." Senna, or French *séné*, is a species of plant found in Egypt and Syria, the leaves of which were used as a medical purgative.

as the metamorphosis of Cadmus into a serpent,[22] and that of Procne into a swallow.[23] Regarding these events Horace said,

> *Non tamen intus*
> *Digna geri promes in scenam, multaque tolles*
> *Ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.*
> [*Art. Poet.* Song 4][24]

While the laws of tragedy are correctly founded on good reasons, and they do not prevent the staging of such events, a sensitive poet should always avoid doing so. Since the events can almost never be represented with *vraisemblance*, or decency, they degenerate into a cold and puerile spectacle. It is not as easy to impose these things on our eyes as on our ears. Certain fictions succeed more in a story than in a performance. The event, which may be able to move us if it were recounted with an ingenious choice of circumstances, in a story where *vraisemblance* could be managed, becomes a puppet show when presented in the theatre. In truth, these metamorphoses represented on the stage in the operas of France and Italy almost always give rise to laughter, even though the event was tragic in itself. This is why the tragic poet should use a narrative to present all such events to us. But the narrative of an actor is nothing other than the imitation of an imitation and a second copy.

---

22 Cadmus is a well-known figure from Greek mythology. Credited with founding the city of Thebes, Cadmus was also (falsely) said to have given the Greeks their alphabet. This character's story can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 3.1–137 and 4.565–603.

23 Also from Greek mythology, Procne led a brutal life. Her husband, King Tereus of Thrace, raped Procne's sister and then tore out her tongue. The son of Procne and Tereus, Itys, was served up as a meal by Procne to her husband. In revenge, the gods turned Procne into a bird. This story is recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6.424–674.

24 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 5.182–184. The full passage (179–188) is worth reading (*Italics* indicate the portion quoted by Du Bos):

> Either an event is acted on the stage, or the action is narrated.
> Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears
> than what is brought before the trusty eyes and what
> the spectator sees for himself. *Yet you will not*
> *bring upon the stage what should be performed behind the scenes,*
> *and you will keep much from our eyes which an actor's*
> *ready tongue will narrate anon in our presence*;
> so that Medea is not to butcher her boys before the people,
> nor impious Atreus cook human flesh upon the stage, nor Procne
> be turned into a bird, Cadmus into a snake.
> Whatever you thus show me, I discredit and abhor.

Whatever action we hear about in a narrative should be very moving in itself, but it should affect us less than were there another less tragic action dramatically exhibited and represented before us. The first scene between Rodrigo and Chimène[25] moves us more than the story of Chimène's father that she told to the King, even though the narrative was made by a character who took such a great interest in the event. Meanwhile the death of the Count is a worse event, and as a consequence it is easier to find it more engaging than the conversation between Chimène and Rodrigo.

In some subjects, beauty principally consists in the high-mindedness displayed by the actors, and in the nobility of their feelings. For example, situations which must violently and continually agitate the people involved, and which therefore should raise in us difficult, very lively sentiments and animated conversations, are more suitable for the tragedian. In treating similar subjects, the poet holds our attention and makes us immediately see the main events of the action, without the help of narration. Being able to discern subjects is extremely important, and we can say to painters what Horace said to poets:

> *Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam*
> *Viribus* …[26]

Whether you paint or write poetry, take care to choose a subject that agrees with a paintbrush, if you want to make a painting, and what is appropriate for the pen, if you are a poet. Choose subjects suitable to your particular genius and in proportion to your personal talents. We will treat this last topic at greater length in what follows. Let us return to the subjects especially appropriate for being treated either in a poem or in a painting.

---

25 Du Bos refers to a tragicomedy called *Le Cid* [El Cid] by Pierre Corneille, which is based on another play called *Mocedades del Cid*, written in 1621 by Guillem de Castro. Both plays take up the legendary Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, a medieval Spanish warrior, known as El Cid. Rodrigo kills the father of his beloved Chimène in a duel, defending his father's honour. Rodrigo subsequently saves the Kingdom of Castile and marries Chimène.

26 Du Bos has reproduced only a stub of the verse from Horace's *Art of Poetry* 38–40, which reads more fully:

> *Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam*
> *Viribus* et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
> Quid valeant umeri.
> *Take a subject, ye writers, equal*
> *to your strength*, and ponder long what your
> shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear.

Generally speaking, the poet who treats an unknown subject can easily make the characters known in the first act: as we have already said, he can make us care about them. On the contrary, the painter lacking these means should never try to treat a subject taken from some little-known book. He should introduce on his canvas only characters everyone recognizes, at least everyone for whom he produces his painting. It is necessary that everyone already knows them, because the painter serves only to remind us of them. We have spoken of spectators' indifference for paintings where they do not recognize the subject.

A painter should always have this intention; but this intention is even more necessary when he makes easel paintings, which end up moving around with their masters. The subject of frescoes painted the walls, and great pictures which always remain in the same place, if they are not well known, can become known. One can grasp that the painting on the altar of a Chapel represents some event in the life of the Saint in whose name the church is dedicated. In the end, the fame that instructs everyone about the value of these works at the same time teaches them the history the painter adopted as his subject.

There are subjects that are generally known. There are others that are only well known in certain countries.

The best-known subjects in all of Europe are all of the subjects taken from Holy Scriptures. This is perhaps why Raphael and Poussin preferred these subjects to others, especially when paintings on canvas. Most of Poussin's paintings represent an action taken from the Bible. The main events of Greek and Roman history and the fabulous stories of the Gods loved by these two nations are also widely known subjects. The custom now established among all civilized countries of Europe urges us to make the study of Greek and Roman authors a very serious occupation of children. In studying these authors, we fill their heads with myths and histories of their country, and what we learn during childhood is hard to forget.

This is not the case with regard to modern history, either ecclesiastical or profane. Every country has its saints, its kings, and its great and well-known personalities; everyone recognizes them easily, but this is not the case in other countries. Saint Petronius[27] dressed as a bishop, and carrying on his hand the city of Bologna with its characteristic buildings and towers, is not as widely known in France as he is in Lombardy. Saint Martin cutting his cloak,[28] an

27 This is a rather obscure reference to an ancient Bolognese saint, Saint Petronius (ca. AD 450), convert to Christianity from paganism, and bishop. He became better known in the Middle Ages when hagiographical efforts recovered his effects, and his life became celebrated annually as a Feast Day.

28 St. Martin of Tours (316 or 336–397), Bishop of Tours. As a young man, Martin served in

action which painters and sculptors often represent, is not as well known in Italy as it is in France.

The French have common knowledge of the history of France over the last two centuries. They have an idea of the image of the face and the clothing of those centuries' greatest figure, Henry IV. But the King's head would not become the subject of a painting in Italy as it might in France. Each people also have their particular myths and imaginary heroes. The heroes of Tasso[29] and Ariosto[30] are not as well known in France as in Italy. Those stories of Astraea[31] are better known to the French than to the Italians. Only the feats of Don Quixote, a hero of a particular type, are as well known to foreigners as to compatriots of the ingenious Spaniard who gave him his very existence.

Horace is deservedly held to be the most judicious of authors to have instructed poets. Despite their particular abilities for making their characters recognizable, we see that Horace does not leave it to their own judgement, despite their particular abilities they have to make their characters known, to make readers acquainted with their subjects:

> *Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,*
> *Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.*
> [Horace, *Art of Poet.* 5, 129][32]

You are better off choosing the subject of your piece from among the events from the battle of Troy, though so frequently staged at the theatre, than to imagine at your pleasure your tragedy's action, or to draw feats from some little

---

the Roman army. One day, he met a beggar and cut his military cloak in half, giving half to the beggar. The next night, Martin dreamt of Jesus wearing half of Martin's cloak.

29 The 16th century Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1544–1595) depicted awesome encounters between Christians and Muslims from the period of the First Crusade, which lasted from 1095 to 1099. This Crusade famously ended with the capture of the city of Jerusalem in 1099, which, along with rescuing Christians in the Byzantine east from Muslim rule, was the requested objective. It intended to protect against invading Turks from Anatolia. See James MacGregor, "The First Crusade in Late Medieval 'Exempla,'" *The Historian* 68.1, 29–48.

30 Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), Italian poet. He introduced the very idea of humanism into western culture. His most famous work is the romance epic poem *Orlando Furioso*.

31 Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which has been mentioned on numerous occasions in this section, tells the tale that Astraea—the last of the gods to have lived amongst humans—fled the earth because of its increasing signs of wickedness. She is considered to be a close ally of Dike, the goddess of justice.

32 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 5.129–130: "And you are doing better in spinning into acts a song of Troy than if, for the first time, you were giving the world a theme unknown and unsung."

known book about heroes of whom no one has heard spoken, and create your characters from that. What would Horace have said to painters had his words been addressed to them!

CHAPTER 14

Some Subjects Are Particularly Appropriate to Certain Genres of Poetry and Painting. The Subjects Appropriate for Tragedy.

Not only are certain subjects more appropriate for poetry than painting, or for painting rather than poetry, but some subjects are also appropriate to a specific genre of poetry or genre of painting, rather than to other genres of poetry and painting. The sacrifice of Iphigenia, for example, is only suitable for a picture in which the painter can give his figures a certain grandeur. Such a subject ought not to be represented with tiny figures suitable for embellishing a landscape painting. Life size figures are not apposite for comic subjects. Larger than life figures are not appropriate in a representation of a toilette of Venus. Do not ask for the scientific explanation of these proportions. I can only indicate that instinct dictates them and point to the example of the great painters who have felt them.

Poetry is the same. Tragic events ought not to be related in epigrams. The epigram can, at most, heighten and put into context some remarkable occurrence from among these events; it can make us admire some characteristic, but it cannot engage us. We can scarcely find, among ancient and modern epigrams, five or six good ones on tragic subjects. Comedy is not meant to portray atrocious acts. Thalia does not know how to issue imprecations or impose just penalties on serious crimes. Eclogues are not adapted to violent and bloodthirsty passions.

Those who pay close attention to the few reflections that I am about to offer on the events appropriate to tragedy will, perhaps, not chose unsuitable subjects for tragedy.

The main goal of tragedy is to excite in us fear and pity.[1] Consequently, the tragic poet ought, in the first place, to show us pleasant and respectable people who are, in the course of events, represented in a truly unfortunate state. Start by sketching the people that you want to be pitied. It is necessary that the characters in the tragedy not deserve to be unfortunate, or at least not as unfortunate as they are. If their misfortunes are not pure bad luck, but a punishment that they deserve, the punishment must be excessive. At least, if they

1 Aristotle, *Poetics* 11.1452a.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_018

have committed actual crimes, they must have been committed involuntarily. Oedipus[2] would no longer be the protagonist of a tragedy if he had known, at the time of the fight, that he drew his sword against his own father. The misfortunes of criminals do not appropriately touch us; they are reasonable sufferings and imitation of them will excite neither fear nor real pity.

A terrible event staggers and tries us at the same time. Now, nothing is less surprising than the punishment of someone who, by his crimes, has offended heaven and earth. The impunity of great criminals would be surprising. Their punishment would not cause in us terror or fear. The penalty that great crimes deserve would not cause in us fear or the kind of terror which prevents arrogance and makes us diffident. The punishment deserved by serious crimes does not seem to scare us. The horror that these offences inspire in us insulates us against the fear that we would ever commit similar misdeeds. We may fear the type of fate that befell Pyrrhus in Racine's *Andromache*,[3] but not of committing crimes as black as those of Narcissus in *Britannicus*.[4] A criminal's submission, in a poem, to his ordinary destiny, does not arouse our compassion. If we actually saw him tortured, a reflexive compassion would be aroused. However, since the emotions that imitations produce are not as powerful as those that the object itself arouses, we do not feel a similar compassion when presented with an image of the tragic protagonist's crimes. We have, in the course of the piece, wished several times for everything that happens in the protagonist's downfall, and we applaud heaven whose delayed punishment is, in the end, vindicated.

Everyone knows that, in poetry, we mean by 'criminal' a man who voluntarily violates the precepts of natural law, unless he is excused by a law peculiar to his country. Respect for the laws of the society of which one is a member is such a great virtue that it excuses, on stage, errors that violate natural law. Thus, when Agamemnon intends to sacrifice his daughter, he violates the natural law without being, in poetry, a criminal. He is excused by his submission to the laws and religion of his country, which authorized similar deaths. The law of his country stands accused of the horror of this crime. We pity the wretchedness of the people of that time, who were not able to descry the natural law through the clouds of false religion that enveloped it. We may say the same of Caesar's murderers, since they had been raised on the principle that violent means were permitted

2 In Greek mythology, Oedipus unknowingly killed his father and married his mother.

3 Racine, *Andromaque* (1667). Pyrrhus is murdered as a result of jealousy.

4 *Britannicus* (1669) is another play by Racine. Narcissus (Narcisse) persuades the Emperor Nero to commit a variety of crimes, including threatening Junia with the murder of her beloved, Britannicus, Nero's brother, if she does not return Nero's affection. Narcissus subsequently persuades Nero to have his brother killed. Narcissus is killed by a Roman mob.

against a citizen who wanted to make subjects of his equals and who, as the Romans said, affects tyranny.

However, a Roman contemporary of Caesar, who intended to sacrifice his own daughter, would be a criminal. He means to violate a sacred precept of the natural law, without being excused by the law of his country. For long before then the Romans had banned the sacrifice of human victims and they had even required free nations who lived under their protection to respect this ban. Thus, an excusable error can, so to speak, rehabilitate the person who is guilty of a serious violation of the natural law. But I will take care to guard against giving rage and first reactions the right to excuse serious crimes, even in the theatre. Someone whose first reactions can make him commit serious crimes is always a criminal. A man's rage cannot excuse the murder of his wife, even in the morality of poetry, the only one that applies here, and the most lenient of all. Such crimes are repugnant to hearts that are not entirely depraved. Those who commit such crimes are odious criminals even if they have lost some freedom of choice. A person with any trace of virtue does not avoid these crimes by moral reflection or resisting temptation. Rather, he lacks an inclination that would ever lead him to similar excesses. He has in him an instinctive and, if I dare say so, automatic antipathy to such unnatural actions. If he could be impelled by the first impulse of anger, the first impulse of virtue would restrain him. Are there not impulses of the virtues as well as those of the vicious passions?

CHAPTER 15

On Villainous Characters That Can Be Introduced into Tragedies.

My aim is not to prevent the introduction of villainous characters into a tragedy. The main purpose of a tragic poem is to excite fear and compassion in us for some, but not all, of the characters. To achieve this end, the poet can excite other passions that prepare us for feeling the two that should dominate a tragic scene, namely compassion and fear. The feeling of indignation we feel toward Narcissus augments the compassion and fear we direct toward the misfortunes of Britannicus. The horror that Oenone's words inspires makes us more sensitive to the misfortunes destined for Phaedra.[1] The negative effect of the advice that the poet makes the confidante keep giving to Phaedra when she is ready to repent makes that princess more pitiable, and her crimes more terrible. We fear getting similar advice in similar circumstances. We can thus introduce villainous characters into a poem in the same way that executioners have a place in a painting depicting a saint's martyrdom. But just as we would blame a painter who depicted likable characters who committed a hateful action, so too we would blame a poet who gave villainous characters qualities capable of winning over the audience's sympathy. That sympathy could extend just enough to make us pity the villain and diminish the horror of the crime through the compassion given to the criminal. This is what is entirely at odds with the whole point of tragedy, which is to purge the passions.

The main focus of the piece should not fall on the villainous characters. The character of the villain is not capable of engaging us by himself; if so the audience could not take part in his adventures as much as they would in the events of a different character who engaged their attention. Who paid much attention to the death of Narcissus in *Britannicus*?[2]

Beyond this there are some villains who should never appear on stage, namely impious ones. Here I call impiety all brutal discourse which through

1 Oenone is a figure of Greek mythology. She is spurned by her husband, Paris of Troy, who leaves her for the Queen of Sparta. Here Du Bos refers to another play by Racine called *Phaedra*, in which the figure of Oenone is nurse to Phaedra, the step-mother of Theseus, King of Athens.

2 Even though he is the title character, Britannicus plays a very minor role in Racine's play, but he is still more engaging to the audience than Narcissus.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_019

senseless audacity is raised against religion in general, or against what is said in the context of the religion being treated on stage. My view is that one should never introduce onto the stage a pagan Roman who mocks Vesta's fire, or a Greek who insolently treats the Oracle at Delphi as a deception invented by the Priests of Apollo. It would be useless to explain that those like Polyeuctes[3] who speak against a people's religion by saying that they know the truth, are not what I mean by the impious. The terms of my proposal prevent all such matters of suspicion.

But, some say that Phaedra freely violates the most sacred of the natural laws: she loves her husband's son, she speaks to him of her passion, she tries everything to seduce him. In the end, what makes her character most identifiable as a villain is that she accuses an innocent party of the crime that she herself committed. Meanwhile, when we see Racine's tragedy, Phaedra's misfortunes arouse no compassion. We can say the same about many other ancient tragedies.

My reply is that Phaedra does not voluntarily commit the crimes for which she is punished. Within the pagan system, a divine power irresistible to mortals compels her to be incestuous and unfaithful. Following what Phaedra and her confidante say from the first act about Venus' hatred of Pasiphaë, and on the basis of the deity's vengeance who considers our princess culpable for all the bad she has done, her crimes would not seem to be her crimes save for the fact that she received the punishment.[4] The hatred falls on Venus. Phaedra, more miserable than she ought to be, is a true figure of tragedy.

Sperone Speroni, a 16th century poet, wrote an Italian comedy entitled *Canace* which, at least, can pass for one of the best tragedies written in Italian [Published in Venice in 1617].[5] The taste for declamation dominates this play much less than in the tragedies of his compatriots. The subject of this tragedy is the baleful story of Macareus, son of Aeolus, and Canace, sister of Macareus. Venus, taking revenge against Aeolus for his persecution of Aeneas, makes Aeo-

3 Polyeuctes (d. 259) was an ancient Roman saint and is the subject of Corneille's play *Polyeucte* (1643). He is said to have destroyed pagan idols.

4 In Greek mythology, Pasiphaë was a daughter of Helios, the sun god. As a punishment for offending the gods, she was inspired with unnatural love of a bull.

5 Sperone Speroni degli Alvarotti (1500–1588), Italian scholar and dramatist. His play, *Canace* (Florence: 1546), was based on a Greek myth about incestuous love. It was at the centre of an ongoing debate about the depiction of immorality on stage. In response to this controversy, Speroni wrote an *Apologia della Canace* (written in 1553 but posthumously published in 1597). See, Gaetana Marrone, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies* (New York: 2007), vol. 1, 1789. The edition to which Du Bos refers is unclear; no edition of *Canace* seems to have been published in Venice or in 1617.

lus' children love each other [Act 1, Scene 1], and Canace commits incest with her brother. The plot of this tragedy led the bright minds of Italy to oppose Speroni, but we should condemn their delicacy once we have read the essay that the author wrote to defend his choice of subject. Since the fate of Phaedra resembles that of Canace, everything the Italian says in his defence supports the Frenchman. I refer my reader to this essay.

It would be superfluous to remark here that, in reading a play, we accept as truths the false beliefs that were held at the time when the events occurred. Everyone knows very well that it is necessary to adopt the actors' opinions. In order to fairly judge their conduct, it is necessary to enter into their thoughts, and to think as they themselves thought. Thus, in seeing the *Phaedra*, we adopt the belief that makes pagan gods the authors and revengers of crimes, even though this belief offends good sense more than the most extravagant metamorphoses that Ovid put in verse.

CHAPTER 16

Of Some Tragedies Whose Subjects Are Poorly Chosen.

The main characters must have interesting makeups. But is also necessary that the things that happen to them must be able to painfully afflict reasonable people, and be able to strike terror in a brave man. We are scarcely moved to compassion by the misfortunes of a forty-year old prince, represented to us as despairing and suicidal because his honour and station require him to part from a woman he has loved, and been loved by, for a dozen years. We could not feel sorry for him for five acts.[1] The excess of passions that the poet gives his hero, all that he makes him say, in order to persuade spectators that the mind of the hero is as horribly agitated as can be, only degrade him further. Wanting to make the plot interesting, the poet makes us indifferent to the hero. The common course of events, and the experience of our friends, if not our own, teaches us that a lively passion wears down so much in twelve years that it becomes a mere habit. A hero, obliged by his honour and his station to break this habit, cannot be so afflicted that he becomes a tragic character. If his affliction goes as far as despair, he ceases to have the dignity requisite in tragic characters. Such misfortune would not strike him down, if he has a little of the fortitude without which one cannot be a virtuous man, much less a hero. But glory, you will say, triumphs in the end and Titus, of whom you obviously want to speak, sends Berenice home.[2]

I will respond that Titus's struggles are beneath his dignity and not worthy of holding the stage for five acts. The claim that, in the end, virtue triumphs over passion is not enough to justify Titus's character. A similar claim could, at most, justify the character of a young princess who, in the course of four acts, revealed the weakness displayed by this emperor. Giving him a soft and effeminate character wrongs his posthumous reputation and is contrary to the laws of *vraisemblance* and of real passion. The historian, from whom Racine has borrowed the subject of his play, tells us only that Titus sent back Berenice and that they parted from each other with regret. *Berenicen statim ab urbe dimisit inui-*

1 French tragedies usually had five acts.

2 Du Bos refers to Racine's play *Bérénice* (1670). Titus, emperor of Rome, loves Berenice, Queen of Palestine. The people of Roman object to his marriage to a foreign queen. Titus decides not to marry Berenice.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_020

tus invitam [Suet. Tit. Vespas. Sect. 7].[3] This author [Suetonius] did not say that Titus gave himself over to the excessive sadness in which, according to the play of which I speak, he is constantly wallowing. Even if the history of Suetonius included all of the events with which Racine has thought fit to adorn it, it would not have been a proper subject for a tragedy. The glory of success does not always compensate for the shame of a struggle in which one had the advantage from the beginning. In a way, an inferior enemy defeats us if he denies us victory for too long. Ten thousand Germans who defeated in open battle six thousand Turks only after a struggle of twelve hours would be ashamed of their victory. Thus, although *Berenice* follows all of the rules, and is perfectly well written, the public does not view it with the same enjoyment as they do *Phaedra* or *Andromada*. Racine poorly chose his subject and, to tell the whole truth, he had had the weakness to undertake it at the insistence of a great princess.[4] When he was given this task, the friend whose advice was often useful was absent. Bolieau has said several times that, had he been in a position to stop Racine from promising that he would undertake it, he would have heartily prevented his friend from wasting himself on a subject so inappropriate for tragedy as *Berenice*.

Always inspire respect for characters destined to make us shed tears. Never dress them in the buskins[5] of people inferior to many of those with whom we live. Otherwise, you will be as blameworthy as you would be had you, in the words of Quintilian, given the role of Hercules to a child: *Personam Herculis et coturnos aptare infantibus velis*.[6]

3 Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Divine Titus* 7.2: "Berenice he sent from Rome at once, against her will and against his own." Suetonius, as he is known in English (AD 69–after 122), Roman biographer, author of the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*.

4 Some 18th-centuries writers held that Henrietta Maria of France (1609–1669), wife of King Charles I of England, encouraged Racine to write the play. Among these writers was Louis Racine, Jean's son.

5 An open-toed, calf or knee-high boot with open toes, worn by tragedians in ancient Greece.

6 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.1.36: "Like putting Hercules' mask and buskins on a baby."

CHAPTER 17

Whether It Is Appropriate to Treat of Love in Tragedies.

My subject here leads naturally to two questions. The first is whether it is appropriate to treat love in tragedies. The second is whether tragic poets can give too great a role to this passion in the plots of their pieces.

Of all people we judge worthy of esteem, we care about what excites them just as much as their misfortunes. But mainly we are sensitive to the worries and afflictions of those whose passions resemble our own. Dialogue that reminds us of ourselves is particularly attractive, entertaining us with our own sentiments. We have a natural predilection for imitations depicting others as ourselves, that is to say, characters who have passions to which we now or previously relate.

A person without passion is a chimera. But no less chimerical is the person who falls prey to all passions. The same temperament that frees us from some of the passions guarantees us others. Consequently, there are only certain passions that resonate with us, whose depiction has privileged rights to our attention.

Characters who are not susceptible to our passions represent themselves rather than us, and they attract our attention by particular associations. For example, Achilles, impatient to go and lay siege to Troy, readily attracts everyone's attention. But Achilles' destiny matters more for a young man keen on military glory than for a man whose ambition is to be deemed commander over others. Such a man cares more about the character given to the Emperor Augustus in Corneille's tragedy *Cinna*, but this character would barely move a fan of Achilles.[1]

Depictions of a passion to which we do not relate, or of a situation in which we have never found ourselves, cannot move us as vividly as paintings of passions and situations that are actually ours, or that were ours at some other time. In the first place, fearing being duped by an unfaithful imitation, our curiosity is never piqued by the depiction of a passion with unrecognizable symptoms. The mind has trouble recognizing passions that the heart has never felt. What-

1 This is a reference to another tragedy written by Corneille in 1639 called *Cinna, ou la Clémence d'Auguste* [Cinna, or the Clemency of Augustus]. The reference is to Emperor Augustus, who is portrayed in this play as a tyrannical executor, caught up in the romantic machinations of the other characters. In the end, Augustus pardons everyone.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_021

ever anyone tells us, we would fail to get a precise or correct idea of the poor soul's suffering as he is tyrannized. In the second place, our heart has little inclination for those passions which we have not yet experienced by twenty-five. The heart may well have acquired all the capabilities of the mind, yet it seems nearly impossible to me that a person of that age has not yet felt every passionate movement that his temperament condemns him to feel.

How can those who are not disposed to feel a passion, or who have never been bothered by some object itself, be vividly moved by its depiction? How can a person whose spirit is insensitive to military glory, and who can only regard what we colloquially call 'a great conqueror' as 'a mad man in charge of all human kind,' actually care about the anxious movements of the impetuous Achilles when he imagines that a conspiracy is afoot to prevent him from being immortalized by taking Troy?

Is a person who does not feel the attraction to card games upset by someone who suffers considerable losses? Not unless he sympathizes with particular shared interests, which make up part of that person's sentiments, so that he is also upset. Without a similar motive, someone indifferent to cards will feel sorry for the gambler for having acquired the dangerous habit of subjecting himself, his happiness, and his own personal safety, to the mercy of the cards. Instinct makes us seek out those similar to us, who share our pains, and who are tormented by similar misfortunes, and who console us in having suffered with us. Dido feels a tender compassion for Aeneas, who must flee his homeland, because she had to flee her own. She felt the same pains that afflicted Aeneas, as Virgil made her say to him:

> *Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco*.[2]

In general, it is normal to judge the natural movements of the heart by the movements of one's own heart. People who are not inclined toward a given passion cannot imagine that the furies with which the poet fills his scenes, and reveals to be the natural consequences of passions that they have never felt, are accurately presented. Or the consequences of a similar passion would appear to them to be pure figments of an unregulated imagination. They cease to care about the characters of a play. They would not regard them as people troubled by passion, but as people who have become truly mad. In their opinion, these are people less likely to be playing a role in a scene than to be locked up in mental hospitals of civilized society.

---

2 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.630: "Not ignorant of ill I learn to aid distress."

An ambitious man is thrown into a frenzy of despair upon seeing a hated rival preferred for an eminent and coveted post. Those who know from their own experience the passion that the poet depicts can arouse furious emotions in the human heart can be enthralled. But the turmoil that some writers call 'the fever of ambition' barely moves people whose natural calm has allowed philosophical reflections to nourish the mind, and who say to themselves that, everywhere and always, people who dole out jobs often decide on the basis of unjust or frivolous motives. What they know of the past, and what they foresee in the future, prevent them from being surprised by what they see. Little mortified, little surprised at the most bizarre choices, they are unlikely to be disposed to enter empathetically into the pains of a character who has left his senses because of the promotion of a peer. Why would one upset oneself so much, they would say, for a human misfortune as common as a fever?

> *Curentur dubii medicis maioribus aegri,*
> *Tu venam vel discipulo committe Philippi*
> [Juven. *Sat.* 13][3]

One does not need philosophy to endure a similar misfortune. Being a reasonable person is enough.

We should not blame poets for choosing as the subject of their imitations the most general effects of passions with which everyone ordinarily relates. But of all the passions, love is the most general: there is nearly no one who has not had the misfortune to feel it at least once in his life. That is all that is required to care affectionately about the pains of those tyrannized by love.

If done in moderation, our poets should not be blamed for giving a role to love in the plots of their works. But they have indulged the current taste too far, or, to put it better, they themselves have fomented this taste with a lack of dignity.[4] In one-upping one another, they have made a gutter out of the tragic stage. Racine put more love in his works than Corneille, and the majority of those who have published since Racine, finding it easier to imitate him by these pathetic means than by others, have gone even further than he did down that miserable road.

3 Juvenal, *Satires* 13.124–125: "Patients in a difficult condition need to be looked after by expert doctors, but you can entrust your pulse even to one of Philippus' students."

4 Du Bos calls this '*lâcheté*,' which in the early 18th century was a more generic term for a base action rather than cowardice.

CHAPTER 18

Our Neighbours Say That Our Poets Put Too Much Love in Their Tragedies.

Since the predilection for using love to move along the plots of tragedies was not to the taste of the ancients, and since this taste has no basis in truth, and constantly does violence to a play's *vraisemblance*, perhaps it will not be the taste of our posterity. Posterity will thus blame our tragedians for the misuse they have made of their genius and, one day, censure them for having given Tircis and Philéne[1] their characters, and for having made illustrious people, who lived at a time when the prevailing idea of a great man did not allow for such weakness, do everything for love. Posterity will condemn our poets for having made a love affair the cause of major events in Rome, such as the formation of a conspiracy to recall the Tarquins,[2] and for having represented the young men of this time as so polite and even timorous in the presence of their mistresses. These are people whose customs are well known from Livy's account of Lucretia's experience.[3]

A highly praised poet of a neighouring nation, which imitates ours a fair bit, has made, in several passages of his works, derogatory comments about French tragedians. This writer suggests that the practice of making love central to every tragic plot, and nearly every character, has led our poets to make several mistakes. Often inaccurately depicting love is one of the least of these mistakes. Love is not only a playful passion; true love, the only one that deserves to be portrayed on the tragic stage, is almost always despondent, somber, and ill humoured. Now, says the English author,[4] such a character would soon be displeasing if the French poets often gave it to their *lovers*. French ladies, to whom everything must be agreeable, would definitely not find these heroes sufficiently gracious. True love often makes the most serious people look ridicu-

1 Du Bos refers to characters from Molière's early comedy, *George Dandin ou le Mari confondu* [George Dandin or the Confounded Husband] (1668). Tircis and Philéne are amorous shepherds.

2 A family of semi-legendary kings of Rome.

3 Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud) raped Lucretia. Lucretia told her husband and father what had happened and then committed suicide. The rape of Lucretia was one of the central events in the downfall of the Etruscan monarchs in Rome and the rise of the republic.

4 Joseph Addison. See, *Anecdotes of Polite Literature* (London: 1764), vol. 3, 64. Joseph Addison (1672–1719), English critic, poet, and politician.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_022

lous. In practice, the groundlings laugh almost as much as they do at a comic scene when they see the representation of the last scene of the second act of *Andromeda*, where Racine paints a naïve picture of the transports and blindness of true love in all of the conversations between Pyrrhus and Phoenix, his confidant.

The English author continues, saying that our poets, in order to put love everywhere, have adopted the habit of calling 'love' and 'passion' the general inclination of one sex for the other, an inclination that is directed towards a particular person by some feelings of esteem and preference. Thus, they have given the buskin to this automatic inclination, which is [held to be] nothing less than a tragic passion and capable of counter-acting other passions. Some of them are not even ashamed to call true love a passion that begins in the course of the play, though it is highly improbable that a newborn passion will become, in a single day, a great passion. When a playwright wants love to play an important role, it should have existed for a while. Love should have had the leisure to take root in a heart and even have had some hope [of success]. But it is true that good French poets do not entertain us with such sudden passions.

This is what makes the gallants of French tragedies so different from real amorous men. Hearing the sweet nothings that these gallants whisper to the ones they love, one would believe that love is a playful passion. They adorn their playful speeches with ingenious touches and brilliant metaphors, in short, with all of the flowery expression that can only be born from an unrestrained imagination. We hear them praise the irons that they wear, and they wish that their chains were eternal, renewed proof that they do not feel their weight. Far from regarding their love as a humiliating weakness, they consider it a glorious virtue for which they are grateful. This is enough to prove that they are not really in love. They pretend to reconcile love and reason, two things as incompatible as fever and reason.

> *Quae res*
> *nec modum habet neque consilium, ratione modoque*
> *tractari non volt. in amore haec sunt mala, bellum,*
> *pax rursum: haec siquis tempestatis prope ritu*
> *mobilia et caeca fluitantia sorte laboret*
> *reddere certa sibi, nihilo plus explicet ac si*
> *insanire paret certa ratione modoque.*
> [Horace, *Sat.* 2.3][5]

5 Horace, *Satires* 2.3.266–271: "A thing that admits of neither method nor sense cannot be han-

Lovers are not consistent. In love, one quarrels about nothing and one is reconciled for no reason. The ideas of lovers are completely unconnected with each other. The course of their feelings is no more regular than is the course of the waves raised at the will of a capricious wind during a tempest. Wanting to nail down these sentiments or to place them in a particular order is like wanting a madman to have consistent visions while in the midst of his delirium. But the substance of things presented to certain nations matters very little so long as they are dressed up nicely.

Another problem, adds the Englishman, that comes of the unfortunate custom of putting love in everything is that French poets, after their fashion, make lovers of aged princes and heroes who, through the ages, have had a reputation for firmness. This is a reputation completely opposed to the one that our poets present them as having. These heroes, thus disfigured, will perhaps appear, to the grandchildren of those who admire them so much, to be deliberate caricatures, intended to be ridiculed. They will take for a kind of spoof, which for a time was in vogue among the French, the plays in which Brutus, Arminius, and other illustrious characters, famous for their inflexible courage and even for their ferocity, are represented as tender and chivalrous. They will put these poems in the same category as parodies of Virgil. Sooner or later this must happen to poets who do not stick to copying nature in their works, who are not embarrassed when their characters do not resemble [real] people, and who are fully content when their characters have a certain pleasing air. They have forgotten the wise advice that Boileau gives in the third canto of his *Art of Poetry*, when he judiciously decides that it is necessary to give their national characteristics to fictional characters:

> *Gardez donc de donner, ainsi que dans Clélie,*
> *L'air ni l'esprit français à l'antique Italie,*
> *Et, sous des noms romains faisant noire portrait,*
> *Peindre Caton galant et Brulus damere*.[6]

The English author holds that the old knighthood and its offspring have left in the spirit of some nations a taste for finding everywhere a love without pas-

---

dled by rule and method. In love inhere these evil—first war, then peace: things almost as fickle as the weather, shifting about by blind chance, and if one were to try to reduce them to fixed rule for himself, he would no more set them right than if he aimed at going mad by fixed rule and method."

6 Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, Canto 3.115–118. Clélie is the title character in *Clélie; histoire romaine* (1654–1660) by Madeleine de Scudéry.

sion, which they call chivalry. This was a kind of politeness never known to the wise and civilized Greeks and Romans. The French, he says, who do not trouble themselves to get to the bottom of things, have never carefully defined chivalry. It is pretending by politeness to profess a love for women that one does not have. The appearance of love remains to flatter them. According to our author, the French have a strong proclivity to affectation. When they ceased to be coarse, without yet being civilized, they wanted to display more civility than they had. Too wise to still be barbarous, but too insufficiently enlightened to know dignity of manner, they have imagined that love has a [kind of] value that wise nations have never found in it. Thus, they imagined that there is a kind of virtue in being dependent on the wishes or, to be more, honest, the caprices of some girl. A virtue in making everything one does depend on her, in living only to serve her. Jousts and tournaments nourished this mania, with their liveries, their devices, and all of their banter. In short, being amorous became fashionable in a country where everything is decided by fashion, even the merits of generals and preachers. Here began the follies of so many lovers, most of whom were not in love. Some were stunned while writing on the walls of besieged towns the names of the lovelies that they thought they loved. Others *went from life to death*, trying to smash with a lance, adorned with the favours of a mistress that they did not love, or scarcely loved, the gates of an enemy city. The story is that several of these gentlemen had the adventures and cause of Hudibras,[7] who travelled the country to return to everyone his liberties and rights, even the bears forced to dance at fairs. A prince is killed in a tournament, he says, to break another lance in honour of the ladies. Another risked breaking his neck twenty times because he found it more gallant to climb to the chamber of his mistress via rope ladder than to enter by the door. A third descends into a den of lions to retrieve his lady's glove. She had thrown it there in order to send him to find it and acquire for herself a false honour at the risk of the life of a man,

7 [Du Bos in-text footnote (inserted in footnote here due to its length): This is the name of a kind of epic poem, written in English during the reign of Charles II by a man believed to be named Butler. It supposes that the principles about the rigour of justice, preached by Presbyterians, impractical in this imperfect world, upset the England of Charles I, in order to fix small problems, turned the head of Hudibras, just as reading novels about chivalry had scrambled the brains of poor Don Quixote. As a result, Hudibras takes to the road to try to give to everyone his rights, properties, and franchises, even the bears forced to dance at fairs for the profit of others, having been arbitrarily deprived of their natural freedom without due process of law and before their peers. His adventures usually end as do those of Trivelin and the heroes of Cervantes.] *Hudibras*, a satirical poem in three volumes (1663, 1664, 1678) that lampoons factions on the Parliamentary side of the English Civil War, by Samuel Butler (1613–1680), poet and supporter of the Royalist cause. Trivelin, or Trivelino, is a stock character from the *commedia dell'arte*. He is a clownish commoner.

whose infatuation made him deserving, at least, of her compassion. Enough has been said of the caprices that would make the Greeks of the time of Alexander, or the Romans of the time of Augustus, were they able to return to the world, take the French, the Spanish, and some other nations for fools. Novels about chivalry and pastorals have fomented in the French the taste that makes them demand love everywhere. This is the source of the imaginary love that is found in most of their writings. Foreigners, especially those disposed to be satisfied only by realistic images and depictions of nature, read these passages without being moved.

Depictions of love in the writings of the ancients are not the same. They touch all nations, they touch all ages, because the truth has the same effect in all times and in all countries. These depictions find everywhere hearts that feel the emotions of which they are ingenuous imitations. The love that the good Greek poets put in their works deeply moved the Romans, because the Greeks had painted this passion with natural colours.

> *Spirat adhuc amor*
> *Vivuntque commissi calores*
> *Aeoliae fidibus puellae.*
> [*Odes*, 4.9][8]

Said Horace, speaking of Sappho.[9] One sees in the odes of this woman, transformed into French in Boileau's translation of Longinus,[10] the symptoms of true love. Depictions of this passion in the Roman poets touch us, just as the depictions in the poems of the Greeks had touched the Romans. The lovers that the Greeks and Romans introduced into their works are not cold gallants. They are men driven, despite themselves, into passions that master them. These men often make futile efforts to draw from their hearts the arrows whose sting makes them desperate. Such is the eclogue of Virgil named for Gallus.[11]

8 Horace, *Odes* 4.9.10–12: "And Sappho's love is breathing still:
She told her secret to the lute, and yet its chords with passion thrill."

9 Sappho (ca. 620–ca. 570 BC), one of the greatest Greek lyric poets.

10 For background on this work and its influence on 17th- and 18th-century aesthetics, see the Introduction, Section 6.

11 Virgil, *Eclogue* 10. Named for Gaius Cornelius Gallus (ca. 70–26 BC), Roman poet, orator, and friend of Virgil. Little by Gallus surives but it enjoyed a high reputation in antiquity.

CHAPTER 19

Of the Chivalry That Is in Our Poems.

Let me tell the French what another English writer says about the chivalry of our poets. The reports are so telling that we cannot prevent ourselves from liking to hear them. And in similar matters to those which are taken up here, it is neither dishonest, nor dangerous, to satisfy the curiosity of interested people.

Perrault [*Parallels of the Ancients and Moderns* Vol. 2][1] blamed the Ancients for not having recognized what we call 'chivalry.' Not a single flourish of chivalry can be found among their poets, whereas in the writings of French poets, whether writing in verse or in prose, namely novels, these graces waft throughout. Wotton,[2] who sides with the Moderns in English, and who defended against Lord Orery[3] the same cause that Perrault upheld in France, abandons his comrade in arms regarding this topic. He will not permit our poets to earn merit for what he calls bland jargon and that we call 'chivalry.' It is, adds the English author [Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, chapter 4], an unnatural sentiment, one of the extravagant affectations that bad taste of the period has made fashionable. Ovid and Tibullus inserted no chivalry into their writings.[4] Would we say that they did not know the human

1 Charles Perrault (1628–1703), French author and member of the Académie française, was renowned for having generated a massive controversy over what has been called "The Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns" for having celebrated contemporary French art and literature over ancient in his poem, "Le Siècle de Louis le Grand" (1687). See Section 7 of the Introduction to this volume for more background.

2 William Wotton (1666–1727), English classicist, theologian and linguist. Wotton was a defender of the Moderns in the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns during this period, although over all he was considerably judicious. He wrote *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, which underwent two editions, first in 1694 and again in 1697 and 1705. Du Bos is principally referring to this work.

3 Roger Boyle, first Earl of Orrery (1621–1679), British politician, dramatist.

4 Du Bos has borrowed these examples from Wotton's *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, (London: 1705), 48–49: "Ovid and Tibellus knew what Love was, in its tenderest Motions; they describe its Anxieties and Disappointments in a Manner that raises too too many Passions, even in unconcerned Hearts … In short, d'Urfé and Calprenèdre, and the rest of them, by over-straining the String, have broke it … The Simplicity therefore of the Ancients, which Monsieur *Perrault* undervalues, is so far from being a Mark of Rudeness, and Want of Complaisance, that their Fault lay in being too Natural, in making too lively Descriptions of Things, where Men want no Foreign Assistance to help them to form their *Ideas*; and where Ignorance, could it be had, is more valuable than any, much more than a Critical Knowledge."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_023

heart, and the tempests that every loving passion knows how to excite? The emotion that we feel when reading their verses makes us genuinely feel that nature itself is explained in its own language. Poets and novelists, continues Wotton [Page 52], such as d'Urfé, Calprenèdre[5] and others like them, who, having occasion to show off their spirit, depict their characters to us sometimes full of love and enjoyment. In making their gracious conversations, they do not depart less from *vraisemblance* than Varillas departs from the truth.[6] As truth is the soul of history, *vraisemblance* is the soul of all fiction and poetry. It is *vraisemblance* that moves us, and that makes us engage with a work and its author.

When I say that Wotton defended the same cause as Perrault, I should add that Wotton, in putting the know-how of the Moderns above that of the Ancients in most arts and sciences, nevertheless agrees that the poetry and eloquence of the Ancients surpass those of the Moderns by a long shot. This is why he explains himself in the chapter I have already cited. Here is what he adds: "But these are qualifications Perrault really wants, who, if we believe Boileau, has neither sufficient Greek nor Latin to draw any parallels between ancient and modern orators and poets. But a particular enquiry into his mistakes would lead me too far astray; and besides, the world would think me very vain to attempt any thing of this kind, after what the excellent Boileau has done already in his *Critical Reflections upon Longinus*. There he gave such a vindication of these great men, that whatsoever I can say after him will appear flat and insipid" [p. 56].[7]

To return to chivalry, one of its characteristics often enervates the function of a pathetic poem. It makes the affection that one would have had for the character temporarily stop. In love despite himself, and because he was overcome by Armide's charms, Renaud's situation actively engages my attention.[8] I am at the same time touched by his passion when he opens the scene, saying to his mistress whom he left for a while: "*Armide, vous m'allez quitter*" [*Opera d'Armide*,

5 Gautier Coste de La Calprenèdre (1610–1663), French novelist.

6 Antoine Varillas (1624–1696), French historian. He is best known today as the author of *Histoire de l'heresie de Vicleff, Iean Hus, et Jerome de Prague: avec celle des guerres de Bohéme qui en ont esté les suites* (Paris: 1682), a book on the history of heresy. His work was controversial in his day.

7 Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, 52. This passage does not appear in the first edition of Wotton's work from 1694. This quotation is taken directly from the 1705 edition.

8 *Armide* is a tragic opera written by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), French composer and dancer. This opera was widely considered to be a great French masterpiece. Du Bos is likely drawn into the characters of this opera given its focus on their psychological development.

Act 5, Scene 1].[9] When he does not respond, she then told him the important motive that makes his departure from her necessary, he replies with the same words that he has already said: "*Amide, vous m'allez quitter*." Renaud then appears to me a man completely freed from love. Love would not know how better to make one feel except by that repetition: it is the mark of unbidden passion that does not listen to reason. But a moment later, Renaud becomes a precious and affected lover, when he responds to his mistress, who says to him, "*Voyez en quel lieu je vous laisse*," with this drab compliment: *"Puis-je rien voir que vos appas*."[10]

It is in the guise of an historian that I report here what our neighbours are saying about us. If I frequent foreign countries in order to learn their beliefs, it is without renouncing my own beliefs. I can say, as Seneca does, "*Soleo saepe in aliena castra transire, non tanquam transfuga, sed tanquam explorator*" [*Second letter*].[11] It is up to our poets to examine the extent to which they should defer to the criticisms of our neighbours. I think I have treated these two questions, whether it is appropriate to put love in tragedies, and if our poets do not give it too great a role in the plots of their works in sufficient depth. So, I have only two more things to say on this subject.

9 "Armide, you are going to leave me."

10 "See where I leave you"; "May I see nothing other than your charms."

11 Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius* 2.5: "I am used to passing into the enemy's camp, not as a deserter, but as a scout." Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 1 BC–AD 65), known as Seneca, was a philosopher, orator, and poet, who made a lasting contribution to Stoicism. While Seneca might be thought of as a Stoic philosopher, strictly speaking, it is more appropriate to say that he worked within the Stoic system. He was not unwilling to integrate non-Stoic ideas within Stoicism, and as such emphasized the independence of his thinking.

CHAPTER 20

Of Some Principles That Must Be Observed in Treating Tragic Subjects.

It is very important that tragic poets make us admire the characters whose misfortunes will, before the play concludes, cost us tears. The weaknesses of love badly mar heroic characters who would inspire us with veneration, if they were not debased by this weakness.

The same reason that obliges poets to let love have too much sway over their heroes must also require them to place their heroes in an era that is a certain distance from ours. *Maior e longinquo reverentia*,[1] said Tacitus. It is easier to inspire in us veneration for people who are only known to us from what we have read in history than it is to inspire veneration for people who lived so recently that living tradition tells us the exact details of their lives. We know details of the pettiness of great men that we have seen or our contemporaries have seen. This puts great men on a par with ordinary people and we cannot have for the great the same veneration that we habitually have for the great men of Rome and Greece. *Audita visis laudamus libentius* [Paterc. Bk. 2].[2] This aphorism is even more true when speaking of people than when speaking of works of art or the marvels of nature.

No man is admirable unless he is seen from a certain distance. Admiration ceases when we can see men from up close, observe their little vanities and little jealousies, and tease out the imperfections of their minds. If we knew as many details of the domestic histories of Caesar and Alexander[3] as we know about the great men of our time, the names of the Roman and the Greek would not inspire as much veneration as they do. I willingly endorse the book that says that the greatest enemies to the glory of heroes are their valets.[4] Heroes always

1 Tacitus, *Annals* 1.47: "Respect is greater at a distance." Publius Cornelius Tacitus, known in English as Tacitus (ca. 56–ca. 120), Roman senator and historian.

2 Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History* 2.92: "We are naturally more inclined to praise what we have heard than what has occurred before our eyes." Marcus Velleius Paterculus (ca. 19 BC–ca. AD 31), known in English as Paterculus or Velleius, Roman historian.

3 Alexander III of Macedon, known as Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), King of Macedonia. His military genius is responsible for the mass conquest of land, which resulted in the enormous spread of Hellenistic culture and language.

4 The proverb, *Il n'y a pas de héros pour son valet-de-chambre* ("No man is a hero to his valet"), is attributed to Anne-Marie Bigot de Cornuel (1605–1694), a Parisian hostess.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_024

profit by being known from the accounts of historians. Most historians like to report the innocent characteristics and little anecdotes that make us admire illustrious men even more. But historians voluntarily conceal everything that will have a contrary effect. This applies to ordinary historians. As for those who want to speak ill [of heroes], they sometimes make people more nasty than they have been, but these historians very rarely make people pettier. An historian highlights his talents, can even flaunt his probity, by reporting the actions of a serious criminal. But an historian degrades himself, and becomes insipid, if he makes his subjects too mundane. One might object that tragic poets can suppress all of the pettiness that can mar his figures. I agree, but the hearer remembers and repeats this pettiness when heroes have lived in a time so close to his own that tradition teaches him about this pettiness.

Besides, Melpomene likes to adorn her victims with crowns and scepters. Today the ruling houses are so interlaced by marriages that we could not show on the tragic stage a prince who had ruled a neighbouring state in the past century without the sovereign of the country, where the play was performed, finding himself interested in this prince as a relation. The problem is self-evident. Thus, I approve of authors who, when they have taken for their subject some event that has happened in Europe in the past century, have disguised their characters with the names of ancient Romans or of Greek princes, in whom we take no interest. We ought not to put on stage everything that the historian can write in a book. The theatre is, in a manner of speaking, a book destined to be read in public and propriety must be observed. Plays represented on stage must maintain due consideration and do so with more severity than the gravest history. When Campistron wanted to put on stage Don Carlos, eldest son of Philip II, King of Spain, he gave him the name Andronicus. In spite of changes to names of the characters, the presentation of this tragedy was, for a long time, forbidden in the Spanish Netherlands.[5]

I agree that Greek poets did not have this discretion. They put on stage recently deceased monarchs and sometimes even living princes. But these poets had been raised under the influence of the democratic spirit that reigned among the Athenians, a spirit which always sought to render odious government by a single person. This method of successfully representing vicious kings and princes on stage must have had much more influence on the imagination of

5 Jean Galbert de Campistron (1656–1723), French playwright and author of *Andronic* (*Andronicus*) (1685). Don Carlos, also known as Carlos, Prince of Austria (1545–1588) was mentally unstable and imprisoned by his father, where he died after over a year of solitary confinement. In the 17th century, much of what is now the Netherlands and Belgium was under Spanish sovereignty.

the Greeks than it can have on the imagination of northern nations. This is why Greek poets sometimes disfigured the true characters of monarchs. This is why they have so often put on stage Orestes, unhappy and pursued by the Furies, while historians record that this prince happily lived and reigned for a long time. *Factum eius a diis comprobatum spatio vitae et felicitate imperii apparuit; quippe vixit annis nonaginta, regnavit septuaginta* [*History*, Bk 1],[6] wrote Paterculus, speaking of Orestes.

Two nations neighbouring our own still put on stage two monarchs who have died in the last century or so. They put on stage tragic events that have occurred in their own countries in the past century. Perhaps they still do not have an accurate conception of the dignity of the tragic stage. Perhaps also their views have some element of Athenian politics. The Flemish tragedy takes as its subject the famous siege of Leiden by the Spanish during the first Low Country Wars [In 1574].[7] In accordance with a practice established by a citizen of this town, it is still staged every year, in the month in which the event occurred. It is full of declarations and statements against kings and their ministers and would have been popular in Rome after the expulsion of the Tarquins. A Greek tragedy never tried to make monarchs as odious as Lord Rochester intended to make them in his tragedy, *Valentinian*.[8]

When our theatre was still unsophisticated, we did not have a similar motive when we put our living monarchs on stage. The French are known to all nations for their natural respect for their princes. They go even further: they love their princes. As one can easily see from the character of the plays in which French poets included their monarch, they erred only out of ignorance. A few months after the death of Henry IV, a play about his death was produced in Paris. Louis XIII, then King, saw himself as a character in this play. From his box, he could see himself represented on the stage, where the poet made him say that studying would kill him, that a book gave him a headache, that only the sound

6 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 1.3: "That his deed had the approval of the gods was made clear by the length of his life and the felicity of his reign, since he lived ninety years and reigned seventy." Contrary to what Du Bos suggests, Orestes was probably not a historical character. He appears in Greek mythology. The deed to which Paterculus refers is the killing of Orestes' mother, Clytemnestra, who had killed her husband Agamemnon, shortly after his return from the Trojan War.

7 In the 16th century, the Netherlands rebelled against Spain. The siege of Leiden was a crucial battle in securing the independence of parts of the Netherlands.

8 Originally written by the Jacobean playwright, John Fletcher (1579–1625), this play was first produced ca. 1610. The title character is Valentinian III, one of the last Roman emperors. In 1684, the English poet John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester (1647–1680), staged a revised version of the original play.

of a drum could cure him, and several other pleasantries of this sort, worthy of a son of Alaric or Athalaric.[9] But reason or reflection has since made us the most sensitive and the most critical people of Europe when it comes to all of the benefits of the theatre. Today, our poets cannot with impunity make mistakes in choosing the time and place of their plays.

Racine, in the Preface to *Bajazet*,[10] whose death was recent when the play was staged, held that distance from the place where an event occurred is as good as distance in time. According to Racine, we do not see much difference between what happened a thousand years before our time and what happened a thousand leagues from our country. I am not of his opinion. We meet no one who has lived a thousand years before us but every day we encounter people who have lived in a country a thousand leagues distant. Their accounts undermine the veneration we are meant to have for someone who appears to be a hero only because he is across the sea. Besides, communication between France and Constantinople is so considerable that we know by the verbal reports of our friends, who have lived among them, much more about the customs and practices of the Turks than we know of the customs and practices of the Greeks and Romans from the accounts of dead authors. These we cannot ask for clarification when they are obscure or too succinct. Consequently, a tragic poet could not misrepresent the general picture of the customs and usages of foreign nations without compromising the *vraisemblance* of his work. However, the rules of our theatre and the practices of our tragic stage require that a woman always have a large part in the plot and that love be treated according to our manners. This prevents our theatre from accurately presenting the customs and usages of foreign nations. True, only a small number of well-educated people notice the defects that result from this problem. However, as it happens, they exaggerate the importance of these defects in order to show off their scholarship and only too many people are happy to repeat their criticisms. I will only add one more word to this observation: with the exception of *Bajazet* and *The Earl of Essex*,[11] all tragedies written in the last eighty years,

9 Alaric I (ca. 370–410), Visigoth king, sacked Rome in 410; Athalric (516–534), Ostrogoth King who drank himself to death. Du Bos's point is that the play in question was suitable for barbarian kings but not a cultivated king of France.

10 A play by Racine (1672), inspired by the story of Bazajet, who was executed in 1635 by his brother, Sultan Murad IV of the Ottoman Empire.

11 Du Bos may refer to *Le Comte d'Essex* (1639) by Gautier Coste de La Calprenèdre. This surmise is based in part the mention of Calprenèdre above; several other 18th-century works took the Earl of Essex as their topic. Du Bos may also refer to *Le Comte d'Essex* (1678) by Corneille.

whose subjects are taken from the past two centuries, have fallen into oblivion, even their names forgotten.

Aristotle defined comedy as an imitation of the ridiculous in humanity.[12] This adequately identifies comedy's proper subjects. Since the only penalty inflicted by comedy is ridicule, it is not designed to represent actions that deserve the most serious chastisement. We should arraign at this tribunal only people who commit small offences against society.

12 Aristotle, *Poetics* 5.1149a32–34: "As for comedy, it is (as has been observed) an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the ridiculous, which is a species of the ugly."

CHAPTER 21

Of the Choice of Subject for Comedies. Where We Should Set the Scene. On Roman Comedies.

I have advanced several reasons showing that tragic poets should set their scene in the remote past. Opposite reasons lead me to believe that a comedy ought to be set in the place and time in which it is written. Its subjects ought to be taken from ordinary events its characters must resemble in all respects the people for whom it is written. Comedy need not place its favourite characters on pedestals since its principal goal is not to make them admired so that they can more easily be pitied. It wants us, at most, to feel for them a concern caused by the unfortunate mishaps that have befallen them, which must be minor setbacks rather than serious misfortunes. As a result, we are more satisfied when we see them happy at the end of the play. Comedy wants us to laugh at the expense of ridiculous people so as to correct the errors that it presents, making us better members of society. Consequently, comedy would not make ridiculous persons too dear to the spectators. Spectators can easily identify the ridiculous in [unfamiliar] people, but would still have trouble recognizing the ridiculous that can be seen in themselves.

We cannot as easily recognize nature when it appeared dressed in the customs, manners, practices, and habits of strangers as when it is clothed, so to speak, in our fashion. The decorum of Spain, for example, is not as familiar to us as that of France. We are not shocked by the ridiculousness of someone who violates its rules as we would be by someone who violates the decorum current in our own country and time. We would not be as struck by the strokes that depict avarice if Harpagon applied his frugality to the spending of a house regulated according to the economy of Italian houses.[1]

We always recognize men in the heroes of tragedies, whether the scene is set in Rome or Lacedaemonia, because tragedy depicts great vices and great virtues. For people of all countries and all eras are more similar to one another with respect to great vices and great virtues than they are in dress, ordinary practices, and, in a word, in the vices and virtues that comedy wants to depict. Thus, the characters of comedy must be cut, so to speak, in the style of the country for which the comedy is produced.

1 Harpagon is the title character in Molière's *The Miser*.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_025

Plautus[2] and Terence,[3] one will object, have set most of their plays in a country foreign to that of the Romans for whom these comedies were written. The plots of their plays presuppose Greek laws and manners. But if this reason is an objection to my view, it is not sufficient to prove the view opposite to the one that I present. Moreover, I will respond to the objection that Plautus and Terence may have been mistaken. When they wrote their plays, comedy was at Rome a new genre of poetry and the Greeks had already produced excellent comedies. Plautus and Terence, who had nothing in Latin that could serve as their guide, too servilely imitated the comedies of Menander[4] and other Greek poets and they put Greek characters before Roman audiences. Those who transplant some art from a foreign country to their own at first follow the foreign practice too closely, and they make the mistake of imitating at home originals that this art habitually imitates in the place where they learned it. But experience soon teaches artists to change the object that is imitated. Thus, Roman poets soon recognized that their comedies would be more pleasing if the scene were set in Rome and if they showed there the very people who would stand in judgement. These poets did this, and comedy composed in the Roman manner divided into several sub-genres. They also made tragedies in the Roman manner. Horace, the most judicious of poets, was very complimentary to the first poets who introduced Roman characters into their comedies and who thus freed the Latin stage from a type of tyranny that foreigners had exercised over it.

> *nil intemptatum nostri liquere poetae*
> *nec minimum meruere decus vestigia Graeca*
> *ausi deserere et celebrare domestica facta*
> *vel qui praetextas vel qui docuere togatas*
> [*On the Art of Poet.* v. 285][5]

2 Titus Maccius Plautus, known in English as Plautus (ca. 254–184 BC), Roman author of comedies.

3 Publius Terentius Afer, known in English as Terence (ca. 190–158 BC), Roman playwright of African descent, famous for his comedies.

4 Menander (ca. 342–291 BC), leading representative of the Athenian New Comedy School.

5 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 285–288:
> "Our own poets have left no style untried, nor has least
> honour been earned when they have dared to leave the footsteps
> of the Greeks and sing of deeds at home, whether they have
> put native tragedies (*praetextae*) or native comedies (*togatas*) upon the stage."

The Romans, speaking of their dramatic poetry, have sometimes confused the genre with the type. Nevertheless, I must try here to clear up this confusion in order to make intelligible the things I still have to say on the subject that I am currently addressing.

Roman drama was initially divided into three genres, each of which was subdivided into several types. The three genres were tragedy, satire, and comedy.

The Romans had two types of tragedy. Some had Greek customs and characters. These were called *Palliatae* because Greek clothing was worn in the productions. Tragedies with Roman customs and characters were called *Praetextata* or *Praetestae* after name of the dress worn in Rome by the upper class. Although it does not survive, *Octavia*, attributed to Seneca, was a tragedy of this type, but we nevertheless know that the Romans had a large number of them. They included *Brutus*, who expelled the Tarquins, and *Decius* by the poet Attius.[6]

Satire was a type of pastoral that some authors say was between tragedy and comedy. We scarcely know more.

Comedy, like tragedy, was first divided into two types: Greek comedy or *Palliata* and Roman comedy, or *Togata*, because it normally included ordinary citizens, who wore a garment called the *toga*. *Togatae fabulae dicuntur quae scriptae sunt secundum ritus et habitum hominum togatorum, id est Romanorum*,[7] wrote Diomedes, an ancient author who wrote when the Roman Empire still existed [*On the Art of Gram*. 3, 4].

Roman comedy was subdivided into four types: comedy *Togata* proper, comedy *Tabernaria, Atellana* and mime.

Plays of the first sort were very serious and they even included upper class people, so they were sometimes called *Praetextatae*.[8] *Apud Romanos*, said Diomedes, *Praetextata, Tabernaria, Atellana, Planipes* [Ibid., Chapter 4].[9] Plays of the second sort were comedies but a little less serious. Their name comes from *Taberna*, which means a meeting place suitable for gathering people of different classes, who played a role in these pieces.

---

6 Lucius Attius (170–ca. 90 BC), also known as Lucius Accius, Roman tragedian and scholar. Only fragments of his fifty or more works survive.

7 Diomedes Grammaticus, *Art of Grammar* 3.4: "The comedies are called *Togata* which were written according to the fashion and dress of toga wearing men; it is of the Romans." Diomedes Grammaticus (fl. late-4th century AD), Latin grammarian.

8 Garment worn by priests and magistrates.

9 Diomedes, *Art of Grammar*: "Among the Romans there are Praetextata, Tabernaria, Atellana, and Planipes plays."

Atellanae were plays a little like ordinary Italian comedies, that is to say, the dialogue is not written. An actor in an *Atellana* extemporized his role and embellished it at will. Livy, in his history of the development of comedy in Rome, said that the youth of Rome did not want this amusement to become an art. They kept it to themselves. This is why, Livy added, people who acted in *Atellanae* retained all of the rights of citizens. They could serve in the army as if they had not performed in the theatre.[10] *Eo institutum manet ut actores Atellanarum nec tribu moveantur et stipendia, tamquam expertes artis ludicrae, faciant* [Book 7].[11] Festus[12] says that spectators did not have the right to make actors in these plays unmask, though they could make other actors dismask. It is well known that sometimes actors were not free to remove their masks. *Atellani ius habent personam non ponere*.[13] All of these comedians wore a particular kind of shoe called a *socque*[14] while they acted. The *cothurne* was the shoe of tragedians.

Mimes resembled our farces and the players acted without shoes. However, asked Seneca, do we find in poets maxims that philosophers would be honoured to write? I do not speak of tragedies or even of comedies in long robes which, by their gravity, hold a place between amusing comedy and tragedy. Even mimes have many maxims of Publilius Syrus.[15] These are more suited to declamation by actors wearing the *socque*, or even the *cothurne*, than by actors without shoes. *Quam multi poetae dicunt, quae philosophis aut dicta sunt aut dicenda! Non adtingam tragicos nec togatas nostras. Habent enim hae quoque*

---

10 Roman actors were usually classified as *aerarii*, which meant they were considered the lowest class of citizens—if citizens at all—and not allowed to enlist in the army.

11 Livy, *History of Rome* 7.2: "it is a fixed tradition that performers of Atellan plays are not disfranchised, but serve in the army as though they had no connexion with the stage."

12 Sextus Pompeius Festus (fl. 2nd century AD), Roman grammarian and author of the now fragmentary *De Verborum Significatu* (On Significant Words), which was an abridgement of a work by Marcus Verrius Flaccus.

13 "The Atellan farces retain the right to not remove the mask." Du Bos paraphrases Festus, *On Significant Words*, 268.14–20: "*Sed cum post multos annos coomedi et tragoedi personis uti coeperint, versimilius est eam fabulam propter inopiam comoedorum actam novam per Atellanos, qui proprie vocantur personati; quia ius est iis non cogi in scaena ponere personam, quod ceteris histrionibus pati necesse est*."

"But then after many years comedic and tragic actors began to use masks. It is probable that the new play was done through Atellan actors on account of a lack of comic actors, who in particular are called masked; since it is their right to not be compelled to remove their masks on stage, which is required of other actors."

14 In English, the shoe suitable for a comedian is known as a clog.

15 Publilius Syrus (fl. 1st century BC), Roman author known for his *sententiae*, moral sayings or proverbs, and mimes.

aliquid severitatis et sunt inter comoedias ac tragoedias mediae. Quantum disertissimorum versuum inter mimos iacet! Quam multa Publilii non excalceatis, sed coturnatis dicenda sunt! [Senec. *Let.* 2].[16] This Publilius Syrus was a poet who wrote comedies called mimes and was the rival of Laberius.[17] Macrobius[18] has a lot to say about their competition in his *Saturnalia*. Diomedes completes confirmation of what I have said, writing, *Quarta species est planipedia, Grece dicitur Mimos, quod actors planis pedibus proscenium introient, non ut tragici actors cum cothurnis, neque ut comici cum socci* [Book 2, Chapter 7; Book 3, Chapter 4].[19] The fourth type of comedy is what they call 'shoeless comedy,' because the actors who perform do not wear the buskin, as do actors who play in tragedies, nor the *soque*, as do those who play in comedies of the first three types. The Greeks called this fourth type of comedy mimes.

According to Suetonius, at the funeral of Vespasian, in accordance with the usual practice, an actor portrayed the deceased in a mime.[20] This shows that these pieces had a role in the customs of the Romans. The avarice of this emperor was not made less scandalous by the jokes he often made about it, several of which have come down to us [Dio. Bk. 66].[21] Everyone knows, for example, the line he used to swindle a city that wanted to spend a large sum to erect a statue of him. "Gentlemen," he said to the town's representatives, showing them the palm of his hand, "you must place your statue on this base." *Favor Archimimus*, the name and teacher of the actor who played Vespasian, asked

16 Seneca, *Epistles* 8.8: "How many poets give forth ideas that have been uttered, or may be uttered, by philosophers! I need not touch upon the tragedians and our writers of national drama; for these last are also somewhat serious, and stand half-way between comedy and tragedy. What a quantity of sagacious verses lies buried in the mime! How many of Publilius's lines are worthy of being spoken by buskin-clad actors, as well as by wearers of the slipper!"

17 Decimus Laberius (ca. 105–43 BC), Roman writer of mimes. In 46 BC, Julius Caesar ordered Laberius to appear in one of his own mimes in a drama competition against Publilius. By appearing on stage, Laberius forfeited his status as an eques (roughly, a knight). Liberius included many snide allusions to Caesar in the mime. Caesar ruled that Publilius won the competition but restored Laberius to his noble status.

18 Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (fl. early-5th century AD), Roman author. His *Saturnalia* was a miscellaneous collection of information about Roman religion and culture.

19 Diomedes, *Art of Grammar* 3.2: "The fourth kind is barefooted, which is called Mime in Greece, [but for that reason called barefooted in Latin,] since the actors enter the stage with flat [that is bare], feet, not like tragic actors with *cothurnes* or comic actors with their *socques*."

20 Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 19.2.

21 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 66.

the directors of the ceremony how much the funeral would cost.[22] Told that the expense would amount to some millions, he exclaimed, "Economize, gentlemen. Give me a hundred thousand and throw my body in the river." Below, we will talk more about pantomimes, comedians who act without speaking. But let us return to our subject.

Our lyric and comic poets made the same mistake as Plautus and Terence when our taste, perfected by Malherbe[23] and his successors, became unable to put up with the old farces. French comic poets tried to perfect their works, as other poets had perfected theirs. These poets, without models [to emulate] and, perhaps, without genius, discovered that our neighbours the Spanish already had an abundance of comedies, and initially copied Castilian comedies. Nearly all of our poets imitated them, until Molière. He, after being lost for a time, at length always took the road that Horace judged to be the only good one. His late comedies, if we except those made to counter Plautus, are in the French style. I do not speak of the heroic comedies of Molière because, in writing them, he intended less to produce comedies than to compose dramatic pieces that could serve to recall the magnificent spectacles that Louis XIV, when young, gave to his court. The memory of these spectacles is preserved in foreign countries as much as his conquests are. The public, that scarcely loses good taste once it has been acquired, some years ago rejected all comedies composed in a foreign style that are intended to amuse them. Indeed, unless one knows Spain and the Spanish, knowledge that a poet has no right to expect of the audience, one does not get many of the jokes. How many spectators do not understand half of the jokes in *Don Japhet*?[24] Consider, for example, the joke that turns on the criticism made by Castilians, who enunciate well and carefully, of the Portuguese, who pronounce poorly and swallow parts of syllables. They are "apes who speak Portuguese."[25]

For eighty years two different companies of Italian comedians have been established in Paris. These comedians have been obliged to speak French. It is the language of those who pay them. Since Italian plays that are not written in our style cannot amuse the public, the comedians of whom I speak have also been obliged to perform plays written in the French style. The first English author who rendered the comedies of Molière into English translated word

22 Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 19.2: *In funere, Favor, archimimus, personam eius ferens imitansque, ut est mos, facta ac dicta vivi.*

23 François de Malherbe (1555–1628), French poet, critic and translator.

24 *Don Japhet d'Arménie* (1653), by Paul Scarron (1610–1660), French dramatist, poet, and novelist. Most of his plays are adapted from Spanish originals.

25 *Don Japhet* 5.7.

for word. Those who have subsequently translated Molière have adapted the *comédie française* to the English style. They have changed the setting and the action and made them more pleasing. This was the practice of Wycherly when he transformed Molière's *Misanthrope* into his *Plain Dealer*.[26] The misanthrope is imagined to be an English seaman.

Our first opera composers went astray just as our comic poets did. They imitated too servilely Italian opera, borrowing this type of spectacle without paying attention to French taste, which had been improved by the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, as well as the comedies of Molière. Opera required more *vraisemblance*, it demanded more conformity to rules and dignity in their libretti, than is required on the other side of the Alps. Thus, we cannot today read without disdain the opera by Gilbert[27] and *Pomone* by the Abbé Perrin.[28] These works, written sixty-eight years ago, strike us as gothic poems written five or six generations ago. Quinault, who worked in our lyric theatre after the authors I have mentioned, had not written two operas before he recognized that buffoons, essential in Italian opera, were not suitable in operas composed for the French. *Theseus*[29] was the last of Quinault's operas to include buffoons. The care that he had taken to polish these characters shows that he had already felt that these roles were as out of place in tragedies made to be sung as they are in tragedies made to be spoken.

It is not enough for the author of a comedy to set it among the people who must see it staged. It is also necessary that the subject be accessible to everyone, and that everyone can grasp without difficulty the plot and the denouement and understand the point of the dialogue. A comedy that turns on the details of a particular profession of which the public, generally speaking, is ignorant, would not succeed. We have seen a comedy fail because only someone who has practiced law for a long time can understand it. Farces devoted to the course of life of people with bad habits and of a certain class, are as contrary to the rules of poetry as they are to decency. Only a certain number of people are sufficiently familiar with the originals to judge whether the characters and events

26 *The Plain Dealer* (1676) is, as Du Bos indicates, a loose adaption of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*. It is considered one of the finest plays of William Wycherley (ca. 1641–1716), English playwright. Voltaire considered *The Plain Dealer* the wittiest of all ancient and modern plays.

27 Probably Gabriel Gilbert (1620?–1680?), a nearly forgotten French dramatist.

28 *Pomone* (1671), a pastoral opera, has been described as the first French opera. The music was composed by Robert Cambert (ca. 1626–1677) and the libretto by Pierre Perrin (ca. 1620–1675), sometimes called *l'abbé* Perrin even though he never took holy orders.

29 *Thésée* (1675), early French opera with music by Lully and words by Quinault. Philippe Quinault (1635–1688), French dramatist best known for the libretti he wrote for Lully.

treated in the copies are accurately represented. We get tired of bad company on the stage as one becomes tired of it in life. We say of writers of such pieces what Boileau said of the satirical Régnier.[30]

30 Mathurin Régnier (1573–1613), French satirist. Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, Canto 2, 188–190:

De ces maîtres savans disciple ingéniux,
Régnier, seul parmi nous formé sur leur modeles,
Dans son vieux style encore a des graces nouvells.
From these learned masters the ingenious disciple
Régnier, alone among us based on their models,
In this old style still has some new graces.

Boileau goes on to say that satire should be free of crudeness.

CHAPTER 22

Some Remarks on Pastoral Poetry and the Shepherds of Eclogues.

Bucolic poems must always be set in the country. At least the setting must not be elsewhere for more than a short time. The reason is that the essence of bucolic poems is to borrow from meadows, woods, trees, animals and, in short, all objects related to our countryside, the metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech that constitute this style of poetry. Thus it is necessary to suppose that the characters in pastoral poetry have these things before their eyes. The backdrop of this type of painting must always, so to speak, be a landscape. Thus violent and bloody events would never be the subject of an eclogue. People in the grip of furious and tragic emotions must be insensitive to rustic beauties. It would be entirely implausible for them pay enough attention to objects found in the country that they could draw all of them. Does a general who gives battle reflect whether the ground occupied by his reserves would be suitable for building a country house?

I do not believe that the essence of eclogue is to speak only of lovers. Since the shepherds of Egypt and Assyria were the first astronomers, why are the most basic and interesting parts of astronomy not a suitable subject for bucolic poetry? We have seen authors who have successfully, and to the applause of Europe, treated astronomy in eclogues. The first volume of the *Plurality of Worlds*,[1] translated into many languages, is the best eclogue we have been given in fifty years. The descriptions and images employed by the interlocutors are very suitable for pastoral poetry and Virgil would happily have employed several of these images.

I have said that tragic characters always engage us by means of the nature of the passions and the importance of their stories. However, the stories and characters in eclogues are different. The characters must not be exposed to great dangers or suffer truly tragic misfortunes, ones that would, in their nature, move us deeply. In my view, the events should be copies of what we see in our countryside. The scenes of eclogues, like those of comedies, should be laid in our country, and their subject should be events that we can see happen.

1 *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* [Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds] (1686), by Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), influential French man of letters and member of the Académie française. This work describes the heliocentric picture of the universe.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_026

True, our shepherds and peasants are so coarse that they could not be the models for the characters of eclogue. However, our peasants are not the only ones who could borrow the delights of the country for the topics of their discourse. A young Prince goes astray while hunting and, either by himself or with a confidant, speaks of his passion, borrowing his images and similes from rustic beauties, is an excellent character for an idyll. Fiction requires *vraisemblance* and a work cannot have *vraisemblance* when one introduces characters whose personalities are entirely opposed to the original that we always have before our eyes. Thus I cannot approve of sweet herdsmen who, in some of our eclogues, speak calmly of marvelous things and insipidly about sublime ones. These supposed pastoralists are neither copies nor even imitations based on nature. Rather, they are imaginary beings invented on a whim by poets who only ever consult their own imaginations in forging them. They have no resemblance to the inhabitants of our countryside or to our contemporary shepherds. The unhappy peasants are preoccupied with acquiring, by their arduous labours, enough to meet the most urgent needs of a family always impoverished. Our harsh climate renders them coarse, and the discomforts of this climate multiply their needs. Thus, the languorous shepherds of our eclogues are not drawn from nature. The life that combines the most delicate pleasures with the needs of country life, and particular the careful grazing of flocks, is not the life of any of our citizens.

Virgil and the other poets of antiquity have not peopled their pleasant landscapes with similar phantoms. Their eclogues contain shepherds and peasants of their country and their somewhat nobler time. The shepherds and pastoralists of that time were free from the needs that plague ours. Most inhabitants of the countryside were slaves and their masters ensured that they were well nourished, as a labourer takes care carefully to nourish his horses. Care for children of these slaves was the responsibility of their master, whose property they were. In short, others were charged with the task of providing for the necessities of these shepherds. As unworried about their subsistence as the monk of a wealthy abbey, they had the freedom of mind necessary to indulge the tastes that the mild climate, in the countries they inhabited, nurtured in them. The clear and almost always serene air of these regions refined their blood and disposed them to music, poetry, and sophisticated pleasures. Many of them were born or raised in their master's townhouses and this master did not begrudge them an education, which always works out to the master's advantage whether he wanted to sell or keep these slaves. Even today, when the political state of these countries does not give country people the ease they previously had, and they no longer receive the same education, nevertheless we still see them sensitive to serious pleasures that are out of the reach of our peasants. In some parts

of Italy, peasants watch their flocks and cultivate the earth with guitars on their backs. They still know how to sing of their love in verses composed in the fields, which they accompany with the sound of their instruments. At least they play their instruments with accuracy, if not with delicacy. They call this improvising. Vida, Bishop of Alba, a 16th-century poet known for the elegance of his Latin verses, depicts for us peasants, his compatriots and contemporaries. He says that they are similar to those on which Virgil had modeled the characters of his eclogues:

> *Quin etiam agricolas ea fandi nota voluptas*
> *Exercet, dum laeta seges, dum trudere gemmas*
> *Incipiunt vites, sitientaque aetheris imbrem*
> *Prata bibunt, ridentque satis surgentibus agri*
> [*Poet.* Bk. 3, verse 90][2]

Though our peasants are infinitely coarser than those of Sicily and part of the Kingdom of Naples, though they can neither write poetry nor play the guitar, our poets nevertheless represent their shepherds as the most skilled and delicate singers. Our poets make them characters more subtly tender than those of Gallus and Virgil. Our gallant herders graze on amorous metaphysics. They speak of nothing else and the least refined of them shows himself capable of writing a commentary on the art that Ovid professed in the Rome of Augustus. Several of our songs, made eighty years ago, when the taste of which I speak most held sway, are infected with this same nonsense. In some songs, passion speaks with complete purity, and their authors invoke Apollo only to assist with the rhyme. But how many others are full of a sophistical love that resembles nothing in nature? The authors of these songs, in their cold delirium, intend to put on sentiments that are not their own and are transformed into imaginary shepherds. One feels in all of their verses a poet icier than an old eunuch.

2 Vida, *On the Art of Poetry* 3.90–93:

> Also that known pleasure of speaking often follows farmers,
> when the harvest is happy, while the vines begin to thrust
> their gems, and thirsty meadows drink of heaven's rain,
> and the fields smile at their flourishing children.

Marco Girolamo Vida (ca. 1485–1566), Italian poet and bishop, best known today for his didactic poem, *On the Art of Poetry*.

CHAPTER 23

Some Remarks on Epic Poetry. Observations Concerning the Place and Time from Which Its Subjects Must Be Drawn.

An epic poem is the most difficult work that a French poet can undertake. Because of the reasons we have laid out in speaking of the genius of our language and the metre of our poetry, it is very important that the poet who dares to write one choose a subject that has both general interest and particular interest. The poet cannot hope to succeed if he does not entertain the French with famous periods in their history, and if he does not speak of persons and events in which they already take, if it is permitted to speak thus, a national interest. Not all memorable periods from French history interest us equally. We are not greatly interested in recent periods. Other events have almost become for us events from the history of a foreign country, especially since we do not bother to preserve the memory of the nation's great days by means of holidays and annual festivities. Nor do we perpetuate the memory of our heroes as the Greeks and Romans did. How many among us are touched by events that happened during the reign of Clovis and during the first dynasty of our kings?[1] To find a subject of lively interest from our history, I believe that we should not look earlier than Charles VII.[2]

True, the reasons that we have provided for believing that we ought not to take an overly recent incident as the subject of a tragedy also proves that a too recent incident ought not to be the subject of an epic poem. So the poet should choose his subject from a time at a suitable distance from his era, that is, from a time of which we have not lost sight, but which, however, is rather distant from us. In this way, he can give his characters the necessary nobility without risking being contradicted by an overly recent and widespread tradition.

Suppose our customs, battles, festivals, ceremonies, and religion could not provide poets with a subject matter as fortunate as those that provided Virgil with the subject that he addressed. Even so, it would not be less necessary to

1 Clovis (ca. 466–511), first king to unite all of the Frankish tribes and, consequently, the first king of what would become France. He established the Merovingian dynasty, which lasted about two hundred years.

2 Charles VII (1403–1461), King of France at the time of Joan of Arc and the defeat of England in the Hundred Years' War.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_027

borrow the subjects of epic poems from our history. This is a problem, but it avoids a much bigger one: the lack of a particular interest. But this is not the way things are. The pomp of a carousel[3] and the events of a tournament are, in themselves, more magnificent subjects than the funeral games of Anchises, which Virgil knew how to turn into a superb spectacle.[4] The miracles of our religion are more marvellous than the fables of paganism. Corneille has successfully treated them in *Polyeucte*[5] and Racine in *Athalie*.[6] Sannazaro,[7] Ariosto, and other poets, have badly introduced Christianity into their poetry, but this is because they have not spoken with the required dignity and decorum. They have joined the fables of paganism to the truths of our religion. They are, as Boileau said, crazy idolaters about Christian subjects.[8] They are blamed for not having sensed that it was contrary to reason, to say nothing stronger, to speak of our religion with the same liberties that Virgil could take in speaking of his. Those who do not want to choose the subject of an epic poem in the way that I propose should give their real reason: the aid of the poetry of the ancients is necessary for their imaginations to flourish. They greatly prefer to address the same subjects as Greek and Roman poets rather than modern subjects. In addressing modern subjects, they could not be sufficiently assisted by the artistry, style, and inventiveness of the ancients. Below we will have more to say on this subject.

3 A carousel was originally an event at a chivalric tournament. In a carousel, knights would, while galloping their horses, try to put the tip of their lances into a ring.

4 The funeral games of Anchises are described in *Aeneid* 5.

5 *Polyeucte martyr* is a drama by Corneille. The plot is based on the life of the Roman Saint Polyeuctus (d. 259).

6 *Athalie* (1691) tells the story of Athaliah (reigned ca. 841–835 BC), Queen of Judah. The events of Racine's play are based on 2 Kings.

7 Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530), Italian poet and epigrammist, best known for his influential pastoral prosimetrum, *Arcadia*: Sincero, the poet's persona, is disappointed in love and pursues an idyllic life among shepherds. Sannzaro introduced the Arcadian theme into European literature.

8 Boileau, *Art of Poetry* 3.218.

CHAPTER 24

Of Allegorical Actions and Characters in Relation to Painting.

Our subject matter naturally leads us to consider here allegorical works and characters, whether in poetry or painting. Let us initially speak of pictorial allegories.

Allegorical works come in two types. In one type, the painter includes allegorical persons in a historical context, that is to say, in a representation of an event that we believe actually happened, for example, the sacrifice of Iphigenia. This is called a mixed work. Alternatively, the painter imagines what we call a purely allegorical work. That is, he invents an event that we know never happened but which he uses as a symbol that stands for a real event. Before we elaborate this matter, let us speak of allegorical persons.

Allegorical people do not exist, but the imaginations of painters have conceived and created a name, a body, and characteristics. Thus painters have personified virtues, vices, kingdoms, provinces, cities, seasons, passions, winds, and rivers. France represented as a woman; the Tiber represented by a reclining man; and calumny by a picture of a satyr: all of these are allegorical characters.

These allegorical characters come in two types. The first have been born for several years. They made their fortune a long time ago. They have appeared in so many theatres that anyone with a little education can immediately recognize them by their attributes. France is represented by a woman, a crown covering her head, the scepter in her hand, and wearing a blue cape sown with gold *fleurs de lys*. The Tiber is represented by a reclining man with, at his feet, a wolf nursing two infants. These are allegorical characters invented a long time ago and everyone recognizes what they are. They have acquired, so to speak, *droit de bourgeoise*[1] among mankind. Modern allegorical characters are those that painters have recently invented, and they continue to invent, to express their ideas. Painters characterize them in their own style, and they give these characters the attributes that are best suited to making them recognizable.

I will speak only of allegorical characters of the first type, that is to say, the elder or old ones. Their younger brothers, who have sprung from the brains of

1 A right of a city dweller in Ancien Régime France to have no lord other than the king. That is, a merchant, say, would have no feudal lord.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_028

painters in the past century, are strangers and status-less people who do not deserve to be mentioned. They are those to which no one has the key. Few people are even looking for the key. I will, therefore, content myself with saying of them that their inventor usually makes poor use of his mind when he spends time with such entities. The painters who today pass for great artists are not those who have given the world the largest number of allegorical characters. True, Raphael has produced this type, but this wise painter only uses them in the decorations that border or support his paintings in the Room of the Signatura.[2] He has even taken the precaution of writing the names of these allegorical characters under them [These allegorical figures have been engraved by G. Audran].[3] Though Raphael was very capable of making them recognizable, nevertheless we do not find this precaution unhelpful. We even sometimes wish that he had gone so far as to give us an explanation of the symbols with which he adorns the characters. While the inscription teaches the names of these characters, we still have a lot of difficulty guessing the significance and importance of all of the emblematic attributes that adorn them.

Let us return to old allegorical characters and see the uses to which they can be put in historical paintings. Skilled people feel that allegorical characters must be employed with great care since these works are intended to represent an event that really happened, and depict it as we think that it happened. Even then they must be used in places where they can be introduced, such as on a coat of arms or in the attributes of the principal historical characters. Thus, Harpocrates,[4] the god of silence, or Minerva,[5] can be placed beside a prince to indicate his discretion and prudence. I do not think that allegorical characters must themselves be principal actors. We cannot be very interested in what happens to characters that we know to be figments of the imagination, and to whom we do not attribute feelings like our own.

Moreover, *vraisemblance* cannot be too exactly observed in painting, any more than in poetry. We are seduced by an imitation more or less in proportion to the degree of *vraisemblance*. The use of allegorical characters as protagonists in a historical work must alter its *vraisemblance*. The picture in the Luxembourg

2 This is one of four rooms in the Vatican decorated by Raphael between 1509 and 1511. The most famous of the paintings in this room is *The School of Athens*. The others are *Disputation of the Holy Sacrament*, *Parnassus*, and *The Cardinal Virtues*.

3 Gérard Audran (1640–1703), distinguished French engraver and engraver to Louis XIV.

4 Harpocrates (or Harpokrates) was the Greek version of Harpa-Khurti or Horus the Child, son of Isis and Orisis. Harpa-Khruti is usually depicted as a small boy with his finger to his lips. The Greeks took this gesture to be a sign for silence but it was a symbol of childhood.

5 Minverva was the Roman goddess of wisdom and war. The Romans identified her with Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom, the arts and war.

Gallery that represents the arrival of Maria de' Medici at Marseilles[6] is an historical work. The painter intended accurately to represent the event: the Queen approaches on the galleys of Tuscany. We recognize the lords and ladies who accompany or receive her. But the Nereids and Tritons sounding their conches, placed by Rubens in the port to express the joy with which this maritime city received the new queen, are, in my opinion, not effective. I know perfectly well that no sea gods appeared at this ceremony and this misrepresentation wrecks part of the effect that it has on me. Rubens ought, I think, to have decorated his port with ornaments more in keeping with reality. The things that you invent to make your subject more pleasing should be compatible with the truth of the matter. The poet must not expect blind faith and complete submission from the spectator. Here is what Horace says:

> *Ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris:*
> *ne quodcumque volet poscat sibi fabula credi.*
> [*Art of Poet.* 338][7]

I am also persuaded that the magnificent picture depicting Maria de' Medici giving birth[8] would have been more pleasing had Rubens painted women of the time who could assist at the queen's childbed rather than having Genius and other allegorical figures participate in the event. We would view it with more satisfaction if Rubens had exercised his artistry, and represented some of them as content, others as transported by joy, some of them aware of the queen's labour pains, still others a little awed by the sight of a Crown Prince of France. Painters are poets, but their artistry does not consist in inventing chimeras or intellectual games. Rather, it consists in carefully imagining passions and sentiments that they must give to characters and suiting these to the characters' personalities and the situations in which they are supposed to be. It also consists in making it possible for us to discover these sentiments. I do not recall that either Raphael or Poussin ever made such poor use of allegorical characters as I dare to criticize in Ruben's picture.

---

6 This is another of the paintings that Rubens provided for Maria de' Medici's new Luxembourg Palace: *The Disembarkation at Marseilles* (Maria's arrival in France to join Henry, to whom she had been married by proxy in Florence). As Maria walks down a gangplank, Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, Triton, his son, and three Nereids frolic in the waves.

7 Horace, *Art of poetry* 338–339: "Fictions meant to please should be close to the real, so that your play must not ask for belief in anything it chooses." Modern editions modify '*volet*' of the manuscripts to the grammatically correct '*velit*.'

8 *The Birth of the Dauphin at Fontainebleau*, another painting in the Marie de' Medici cycle.

But, one might object, painters for a long time had the right to paint tritons and nereids in their pictures, although they have never been seen in nature:

> *… pictoribus atque poetis*
> *quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas*.[9]

Why, therefore, reproach Rubens for having put them in the picture that represents the arrival of Maria de' Medici at Marseilles? The nudity of these divinities is marvellously effective in this work, among all of the attired figures that history obliged him to include.

I respond that the license given to painters and poets must be understood, as Horace says, *sed non ut placidis coeant inmitia*.[10] That is to say, this licence does not extend to bringing together in the same picture incompatible things, such as the arrival of Maria de' Medici in Marseilles and tritons sounding their conches in the port. Maria de' Medici has never been seen in the same place as some tritons, even if we include a "picturesque place," as Corneille wanted us to call the theatre. If Rubens needed nude figures to emphasize his design and colour, he could have put in his picture, in whatever pose he liked, galley slaves aiding the disembarkment.

This is not to dispute that painters have acquired the right to paint sirens, tritons, nereids, fauns, and all imaginary divinities. These are the noble chimeras with which the imaginations of poets people the waters and forests, and enrich all of nature. My critique is not based on the fact that there never were sirens or nereids. Rather, it is based on the fact that they no longer existed, so to speak, at the time of the event which gave rise to this discussion. I will grant that there are historical works in which sirens, tritons, and other imaginary divinities, can play a role. These are works that represent events that occurred during pagan times, when the world believed that these divinities really existed. But these same divinities do not have a role in historical paintings which represent events since the end of paganism and in a time in which they have already lost the type of existence that popular opinion gave them in other eras. They can only be put in this latter sort of work as allegorical figures or symbols. For we have already seen that allegorical characters may not enter historical works except as symbolic characters that denote the attributes of historical characters.

The spectator can easily adopt the belief current at the time the event, represented by the poet and painter, happened. Thus, I regard Iris as a historical

9 Horace, *Art of poetry* 9–10: "'Painters and poets,' you say, 'have always had an equal right in hazarding anything.'"

10 Horace, *Art of poetry* 12: "but not so far that savage should mate with tame."

character in a representation of the death of Dido.[11] Venus and Vulcan are historical characters in the life of Aeneas. We are in the habit of believing that these divinities really existed in those times, because then people believed in the existence of these divinities. Thus, the painter who represents the stories of a Greek or Roman hero can make all the divinities intervene as principal characters. He can freely embellish his works with tritons and sirens. There is no inconsistency in this. I have already said, the books that occupy our youth, and the *vraisemblance* that we saw in a hero rescued by the gods he worshiped, dispose us to believe the fiction without any difficulty. As a result of speaking during our childhood of the loves of Jupiter and the passions of other gods, we form the habit of regarding them as beings that used to exist and who were subject to passions of the same type as ours. When we read the history of the Battle of Pharsalus, only after reflection do we distinguish the kind of existence of thundering Jupiter from the kind of existence of Caesar and Pompey.

But these divinities change their nature, so to speak, and become purely allegorical characters in the representation of events happening after pagan religion had run its course. When they are introduced into these events as real people, I would happily compare them to the patron saints of those who commissioned devotional subjects. Painters used to put these saints in paintings, more devout than sensible, and without regard for chronology or *vraisemblance*. We see St. Jerome at the Last Supper and St. Francis present at the Crucifixion. This bad practice was relegated a long time ago to village pictures.

After having spoken of allegorical characters, it is proper to return to allegorical works. Such a work is the representation of an incident that never happened. The painter makes it up to represent one or several marvellous events in a manner that is not constrained by historical truth. Painters employ these works approximately as the Egyptians used hieroglyphics: to put before our eyes some general moral truth.

Allegorical compositions are of two types. The first are purely allegorical because they only include symbolic characters that have sprung from the brains of painters and poets. Two tempura paintings by Correggio[12] are of this type. They can be seen in the King's chambers. In one, the painter represents humanity tyrannized by the passions. In the other he expressed in a symbolic manner the rule of virtue over the passions. In allegorical works of the second

11 At the end of *Aeneid* Book 4, the messenger of the gods, Iris, takes a lock of Dido's hair, preparing her for death.

12 Antonio da Correggio (1489–1534), leading painter of the Parma school of Renaissance painting, known for his vigorous and sensual style. Du Bos apparently refers to *Allegory of Virtues* (ca. 1530) and *Allegory of the Vice* (ca. 1530), both currently in the Louvre.

type, the painter combines historical people with allegorical characters. Thus, the painting, *The Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Maria de' Medici*, on the ground floor of the Luxembourg Gallery, is a mixed composition. The subject of the painting is fictional, but the painter introduces into the action the decree of parliament that conferred the regency on the queen, Henry IV, and several other historical personages.

Only rarely do painters succeed with purely allegorical works. This is because it is nearly impossible for compositions of this type to make their subject distinctly known and to make their ideas accessible, even to the most intelligent spectators. They are even less capable of touching the heart, which is little inclined to be softened by imaginary characters, regardless of the setting in which they are represented. Thus only in emergencies ought purely allegorical situations to be placed in a work, and only to extract a painter from a predicament from which he cannot escape by ordinary means. These works ought to include only a small number of figures, and these cannot be too easily recognized. If it is not easily understood, it will be dismissed as mere gibberish. Gibberish is found in painting as well as in poetry.

I cannot remember a single purely allegorical subject which can be cited as a model and that Poussin or Raphael would have used. I make a judgement about their feelings on the basis of their works. True, it seems impossible to imagine a work in this genre more elegant in its simplicity, or sublime in its appropriateness to its site, than that conceived by the former Prince of Condé.[13] I will say that he was the man, not merely the prince, of his time with the liveliest mind and the most brilliant imagination.

The prince of whom I speak, commissioned for the Chantilly Gallery the history of his father, commonly known in Europe as the Great Condé.[14] He encountered a problem in the execution of this project. The hero, in his youth, found himself in the service of enemies of the state and some of his greatest deeds were accomplished when he did not bear arms for his country. Thus it seemed that he should not show off these feats of arms in the Chantilly Gallery. On the other hand, some of his battles, such as the relief of Cambrai and the retreat from Arras, were so brilliant that a son so enamoured of his father's glory must be very mortified to remove these battles from the temple, of a sort, that

13 Henri Jules de Bourbon (1643–1709), Prince of Condé. Du Bos paints a flattering picture of a nasty man. He took an interest in the arts and sciences, but he was also a cruel, brutal man, who beat his wife and was subject to violent rages. He died insane.

14 Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, given the epithet "the Great" (1621–1686), French general. He spent part of his career in the service of Spain and fighting against France. Chantilly was the principal residence of the Condé family.

he erected to the memory of this hero. The ancients would have said that piety inspired him and suggested the means of preserving the memory of these great battles, by claiming to want to forget them. He ordered the portrayal of the muse of history, an allegorical character but very well known, holding a book on which was written, *Life of the Prince of Condé*.[15] This muse tears pages from this book and throws them on the ground. These pages read "relief of Cambrai," "relief of Valenciennes," "retreat from Arras:" in short, the names of all the great battles of the Prince of Condé during his stay in the Spanish Netherlands. Everything about these battles was praiseworthy, except the uniform he wore when he fought them. Unfortunately, this picture has not been executed in accordance with such an ingenious and simple idea. The prince who had conceived such a noble idea was on this occasion too compliant and too deferential to art. He permitted the painter to alter the elegance and simplicity of the conception by the addition of figures that improved the composition of the painting, but which did not make it say anything more than what it already said in such a sublime manner.

The allegorical works that we have called mixed works are more common than purely allegorical works. Their subjects are fictional, as those of purely fictional works are. Nevertheless, since some of their characters are recognisable as historical people, the meanings of these fictions are put within reach of everyone and they are capable of teaching, engaging, and even charming us.

Painters find that this second type of allegorical work is very helpful when they want to express a lot of things that they could not express in a historical work, or want to represent in a single picture several events, each of which seems to require a separate canvas. The Luxembourg Gallery and those of Versailles show this. Rubens and Le Brun have found a way to represent by means of these mixed fictions things that we did not think could be portrayed with pigments. They display in a single picture events that an historian could only narrate in several pages. Here are some examples:

In 1672, France declared war on the Netherlands. The Spanish were forbidden by treaty to interfere in the quarrel, but this did not stop them from giving secret assistance [to the Netherlands]. But this assistance could not hinder the rapid conquests of France, but only provide obstances that were easily overcome. In order more effectually to oppose the French advance, they took off the mask and declared war. Their open assistance was not any more successful than the secret assistance. Despite this aid, the late king[16] captured Maastricht

15 *Le repentire du grand Condé* [The Repentance of Condé the Great], by Michel Corneille the Younger (1642–1708), French painter and engraver. This painting is still at Chantilly.

16 Louis XIV.

and soon took the war into the Spanish Netherlands. In each campaign he captured a number of very well fortified places. Only peace put an end to these conquests. This is what Le Brun has represented. This is how he has treated a subject that appeared rather more suited to poetry than to painting:

The king appears on a chariot led by Victory and pulled quickly by coursers. This chariot overturns as it moves the astonished personifications of cities and rivers that formed the Dutch frontier. Each figure is immediately recognizable either by its coat of arms or by other attributes. This is the true picture of what happened in this war, when the conquerors themselves were surprised by their success. A woman who represents Spain and is easily recognizable by her lion and her other attributes, intends to stop the King's chariot by seizing the reins. But instead of the reins, she only grabs the traces. The chariot that she wanted to stop drags her and the mask she wears falls to the ground in this useless struggle.[17]

It would be pointless to go to a lot of trouble to persuade painters that, sometimes, good use can be made of allegorical subjects and characters. They are only too inclined to employ allegories to an extreme in all subjects, even in those that are least suited to such embellishment. Love of using too much imaginative brilliance, commonly known as wit, is a fault common to all people. This fault often leads people astray, even in professions much more responsible than painting. Nothing makes one speak and act as foolishly as the desire to appear witty.

Confining ourselves to painting, I dare suggest that nothing has more often divided good painters from the true goal of their art, and makes them do more pointless things, than the desire to be applauded for the subtlety of their imagination, that is to say, for their wit. Instead of sticking to imitation of the passions, they have been pleased to devote themselves to capricious imagination and to creating chimeras. The mysterious allegory of these chimeras is an enigma more obscure than the riddles of the Sphinx[18] ever were. Instead of speaking the language of the passions, which is common to all people, they have spoken a language that they have invented themselves. Expressions in this language have a degree of vivacity proportional to the painters' imagination, but they cannot be understood by anyone else. In this way, the characters of an allegorical picture often do not speak to spectators, whose imaginations are not as developed as that of the painter. The mysterious meaning is so inacces-

17 Le Brun, *Crossing of the Rhine in 1672* (ca. 1678–1685) in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

18 A mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of a human. In Greek mythology, the Sphinx guarded the entrance to Thebes, asking riddles and allowing only those who could answer them to enter the city.

sible that people cannot reach it. I have already said that pictures should not be enigmas. The goal of painting is not to exercise the imagination by giving it confused subjects to puzzle out. Its goal is to move us and, consequently, the subjects of these works should not be too easy to understand.

One sees in the gallery of Versailles many bits of painting whose meanings are too mysteriously obscured. These meanings elude the subtlest understanding and are beyond the comprehension of the most educated. Everyone knows about the main events in the life of the late king, which are the subjects of all of these paintings. The intellects of curious people receive additional assistance from the inscriptions placed under the main subjects. Nevertheless, there still remains an infinity of allegories and symbols that the most learned cannot interpret. We are reduced to putting on the tables of this magnificent hall books that explain the paintings and which would give, so to speak, the solutions to these equations. We can say the same thing about the Luxembourg gallery. The people best informed about the particulars of the life of Maria de' Medici, like those who are most learned in mythology and heraldry, cannot grasp half of Ruben's thoughts. Perhaps they would not even grasp a quarter of what this excessively ingenious painter wanted to represent, without the explication[19] of these paintings preserved in a tradition, still recent when Félibien wrote it down and included it in his *Entretiens sur les vies des peintres* [Volume 2, p. 198].[20]

All nations, and especially the French, soon tire of looking for the meaning of the thoughts of a painter who always obscures them. Of the pictures in the Luxembourg Gallery, we view the ones with purely historical subjects with the most pleasure, for example, the marriage and coronation of the queen. The power of truth is such that imitations and fictions are never more successful than when they alter it least. After having seen these pictures from the perspective of art, we still view them with the attention that we would give to the narrative of a contemporary of Maria de' Medici. Everyone finds something to his particular taste in the pictures where the painter represents a historical fact truthfully, that is to say, without compromising historical *vraisemblance*. One person remarks on the dress of the time, which is never displeasing when it is

19 [Footnote in Du Bos (included in footnote here due to length): This explication has been revised and expanded by Moreau de Mautour in a work that was printed and published in 1704, when the Duke of Mantua stayed at the Luxembourg Palace and all of Paris flocked to see the Prince and the beautiful gallery of the Palace. A little later it was engraved.]

20 *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes* [Discussions of the lives and works of the most excellent painters ancient and modern] by André Félibien (1619–1695), art historian and official court historian of Louis XIV, was first published in 1666, when he could still draw on an oral tradition.

treated by an artist who knows how to adapt the dress to the air and size of his subjects, and to give them, by means of draping, the grace that their bearing permits. Another studies the features and countenance of illustrious people. The good or ill that history records have long since given him a desire to know their physiognomy. Another devotes himself to the ordering and ranks [of people] at a meeting. In short, in the Luxembourg and Versailles galleries everyone pays most attention, not to the allegorical women in most pictures, but to the expressions of passions. Truly, here there is more artistry in those passions than in all the emblems invented up until now.

An example is the expression, that draws everyone's eyes, on face of Maria de' Medici, after she has given birth. We clearly see on her face the joy of having given the world a Crown Prince, overlain with the visible signs of the suffering to which Eve was condemned. In short, everyone agrees that these are two of the most splendid porticos in Europe, crammed with beauties admirable for their design and colour, and that the composition of their paintings is very elegant. Still, everyone would prefer that painters not have included such a large number of figures that cannot speak to us, or so many events that do not interest us. Now, as Vitruvius very sensibly notes, it is not sufficient that our eyes find their reward in a well-painted and well-designed picture. The mind must also find its reward. Thus it is necessary that an artist choose a subject, that this subject be clearly understood, and that it be treated in a manner that engages us. I can scarcely admire, he adds, pictures with subjects that do not imitate something real. *Neque enim picturae probari debent, quae non sunt similes veritati, nec, si factae sunt elegantes ab arte, ideo de his statim debet recta iudicari, nisi argumentationis certas rationes habuerint sine offensionibus explicatas* [Vit.].[21] This passage will excuse me from speaking of figures that are commonly called grotesques.[22]

Painters must employ allegory even more soberly in religious pictures than they do in secular pictures. In subjects that do not represent the mysteries and miracles of our religion, they may well employ allegories that express some

21 Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 7.5.4: "Neither should pictures be approved that are not likenesses of the truth, nor, if they are made elegant through art, is that any reason why favorable judgment should immediately be passed on them, not unless their subjects follow sound principles without interference." Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, known in English as Vitruvius (ca. 75–after ca. 15 BC), Roman architect and military engineer. His *De Architectura* [On Architecture] is the only surviving ancient treatise on architecture.

22 In the 18th century, a grotesque could be a comic or bizarre work, as well as one that is grotesque (monstrous) in the modern sense of the word. Grotesques often involved distortion of the natural world.

truth that could not otherwise be depicted either in painting or sculpture. Thus I agree that [personifications of] Faith and Hope may support a dying person, and Religion afflicted may stand at the foot of a dead bishop. But I believe that artists are forbidden to use allegories in depicting the miracles and doctrines of our religion. They must always represent historical facts and can, at most, add some allegorical figures to a representation that are appropriate to the subject, for example, Faith beside a saint who performs a miracle.

The imagination is not permitted to embellish the facts on which our religion is based or the doctrines that it teaches. Truths that we do not contemplate without fear and humility must not be depicted imaginatively or by means of an ingenious allegory that is designed to please. It is even less permissible to borrow characters and fictions from myths in depicting these truths. Michelangelo[23] was universally blamed for having mixed revelations about the Last Judgement with fictions of ancient poetry in the painting on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel. Rubens, to my mind, will have committed an even greater offence than Michelangelo in designing, as he did, the picture for the high altar of the Dominicans of Antwerp. This great artist expresses too ingeniously there, by an allegorical design, the value of the intercession of the saints, whose prayers often procure for sinners the time and means to assuage the anger of God.

Jesus Christ advanced between the other two persons of the Trinity, as if to enforce the condemnation of the world which the Trinity has just announced. A globe at the bottom of the picture indicates this condemnation. Christ holds a lightening bolt in his hand and, in the posture of Jupiter in myths, appears ready to throw it at the world. The Virgin Mary and several saints, placed beside Christ, intercede for the world without Christ suspending his action. But St. Dominic covers the world with his cape and his rosary. This is what makes the picture suitable for its location. I believe that we see too much whimsy in the representation of such a terrifying subject. Inspired people can effectively employ parables in order to make more apparent the truths that God reveals through them. God himself inspired in them the ideas they were to use and the way that they must be used. But our painters are honoured enough in being allowed to represent historically the visible events of our mysteries. They are not permitted to invent fictions, and use them as they please, to illustrate simi-

23 Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475–1564), usually known as Michelangelo, Italian painter, sculptor, and architect, regarded as one of the great geniuses of the Renaissance. The ceilings of the Sistine Chapel, a chapel in the Vatican, were painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512. Between 1536 and 1541, Michelangelo completed decoration of the chapel, painting the Last Judgement on the altar wall.

lar subjects. What I have said of painters applies to poets. I do not approve any more of the poem of Sannazaro concerning the childbed of the Virgin, or the visions of Arisoto, than of Ruben's work representing the value of the intercession of saints.

You thus reduce painters to the status of ordinary historians, someone will object, without paying attention to the invention and artistry that are the essence of painting? You want to turn off the imagination of painters, this fire that makes them sometimes deserve to be treated as divine artists? You want to reduce their art to functioning as careful annalists? My answer is that the enthusiasm that makes painters and poets does not consist in the invention of allegorical mysteries. Rather, it consists in the ability to enrich works with all of the ornaments that fidelity to the subject permits, the expression of the passions giving life to all of the characters. Such is the artistry of Raphael, such is the artistry of Poussin and of Le Sueur;[24] and, often, this was the artistry of Le Brun and Rubens.

It is not necessary to invent one's subject or to create one's characters to become renowned as a poet full of verve. One deserves the name of poet by representing events in a way that moves us. This is a matter of imagining the sentiments suitable to persons found in a certain situation and drawing from his genius the properties that best express these sentiments. This is what distinguishes an artist from an historian, who must not embellish his narrative with circumstances drawn from his imagination or invent situations to make the events he describes more engaging. The historian is even rarely permitted to exercise his genius by producing suitable sentiments in order to lend them to his subjects. The speech that the great Corneille gives Caesar after the death of Pompey is a greater proof of the abundance of his verve and the sublimity of his imagination than the invention of allegories for the Prologue to *The Golden Fleece*.[25]

In order to imagine and discover the features that nature uses for the expression of passions, one must have an imagination more fruitful and precise than is required to invent emblematic devices. Two or three books are inexhaustible sources of similar trinkets and, with their assistance, we can invent symbols for as long as we want. In contrast, one must have a fertile imagination, guided by a wise and judicious intelligence, to succeed in expressing passions and in correctly depicting their manifestations.

---

24 Eustache Le Sueur (1617–1655), French painter, primarily known for his paintings of religious subjects.

25 *La Toison d'or* (1660), one of Corneille's late tragedies.

But, the advocates of wit will ask, does an artist not deserve more credit for having invented things that were never conceived than for copying nature, as your painter, who excels in the expression of passions, does? I reply that it is necessary to know something more than how slavishly to copy nature, which is already a lot, in order to give each passion its appropriate character and to express accurately the sentiments of all of the people in a picture. It is necessary, so to speak, to know how to copy nature without seeing it. It is necessary to be able to imagine with precision the workings of nature in circumstances one has never seen. Is having nature in view a matter of drawing a tranquil model when the aim is to paint a head that displays love overlain with jealousy? We clearly see part of nature in the model, but we do not see there what is most important relative to the subject being painted. We clearly see the subject that passion must animate, but we do not see into the state to which passion has reduced it and this is the state that must be painted. The painter must also give the face the effects of passions that are described in general terms in books, as well as other features marked on it. All expressions on a face must be those of a person who is represented as in the grip of a certain passion. The imagination of the artist must do the hard work of capturing an expression, unless he has in his workshop a model who is an even greater actor than Baron.[26]

26 Michel Baron (1653–1729), French actor and playwright, was the greatest actor of his time and appeared in many plays by Molière, Racine, and Corneille.

CHAPTER 25

On Allegorical Characters and Actions with regard to Poetry.

Let us speak of how we can use allegorical characters and actions in poetry. Poetry uses two kinds of allegorical characters: those that are perfect, and others we call imperfect.

Perfect allegorical characters are those that poetry creates completely, to which poetry gives a body and a soul, and makes capable of every human action and sentiment. This is how in their poems poets have personified victory, wisdom and glory, in a word, everything we said painters have personified in their paintings.

Imperfect allegorical characters are those beings who are already actually existent. Poetry gives them an ability to think and speak that they do not actually have, but without providing them a perfect existence, or an existence like our own. Poetry makes imperfect allegorical characters by ascribing feelings to wood, to flowers, in short, when it makes inanimate beings think and speak, or when, elevating the status of animals, it ascribes to them more reason than they actually have, and an articulate voice that they lack. These latter allegorical characters are the greatest poetic ornament, which is never as pretentious as when it animates and makes all of nature speak. The sublimity of the psalm *In exitu Israel de Egypto*[1] consists in this, and in some others, which move people of taste as much as the beautiful scenes of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. But these imperfect characters are never suited to play a role in the action of a poem, unless that action is an apologue.[2] They should take part in the actions of other characters only as spectators, just as the chorus took part in ancient tragedies.

I believe that one can treat perfect allegorical characters in poetry just as we treated them in painting. They should not play one of the principal roles in the action. But they can intervene, either as attributes of the principal characters, or to express more nobly, by the unfolding of the fiction, what might seem trivial if it were simply stated. This is why Virgil personified Fame in the *Aeneid*.

1 Psalm 113 begins, "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people; Judea made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion."

2 An apologue is a fable or allegory that aims to convey a moral lesson.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_029

It is noteworthy that he allowed only a small number of such characters enter into his work; I have never heard Lucan[3] praised for using them more often.

The reader will come to the same reflection that Venus, Love, Mars and the other pagan divinities are historical characters in the *Aeneid*. The events depicted in this poem took place in a time when people were commonly persuaded of their existence. Similarly, these divinities are historical characters in poems of modern writers who stage their scene and actors in pagan times. In treating similar subjects, they are thereby able to use divinities as principal actors; but they take care not to confuse them with other characters who, like Discord and Fame, were only allegorical characters in past times. As for the poets who portray actions that did not happen among the pagans, they should use fabulous divinities only as allegorical characters. This means that neither Minerva, Love, nor Jupiter himself should play a principal role.

As for allegorical actions, poets should only use them with great care. One can successfully make use of them in myths and many other works intended to instruct the mind by amusing it, and in which the poet speaks in his own name, and can himself apply the lessons that he aims to give us. Allegorical actions help poets who have told us truths that they could otherwise not communicate without the action of that fiction. The conversations that myths set up between animals are allegorical actions, and myths are one of the most pleasant genres of poetry.

In no way do I believe that an allegorical action could be a proper subject for drama whose aim is to move us by imitating human passions. Since the author never speaks directly in these sorts of poems, and as such he would not be able to explain what he wants to communicate by his allegory, we could read it many times and still not understand his idea. It takes a great mind to get the point of an allegory. I believe we should leave it to narrative poets, and it should never be used by dramatists.

Besides, it is impossible that a piece whose subject is an allegorical action engage us. Writers to whom no one would deny spirit have tried this genre and have not succeeded, except where they have really wanted to be ingenious and treated a subject historically. The brilliance that is born of a *metaphorical* action, the delicate thoughts that it suggests, and the fine turns with which one applies an allegory to human follies, in a word, all the graces that a free spirit can take from a similar fiction, have no place in the theatre. A pedestal is never made for a statue. Our heart searches for truth in fiction; and when

3 Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, known in English as Lucan (39–65), distinguished Roman poet. His surviving work, *Pharsalia*, is also known as *On the Civil War*, and is concerned with the struggle between Caesar and Pompey.

it is presented with an allegorical action, it cannot figure out how to relate to the sentiments of these chimerical characters. It regards them as symbols and enigmas, under which are enveloped moral precepts and traits of satire that are within the mind's competency. But a theatrical piece that speaks only to the mind could not hold our attention for long. We can say, with Lactantius,[4] to the dramatic poets: "Learn that poetic license has its limits, beyond which it is never permitted to carry the fiction. The art of poetry consists in a good representation of what truly happened, and it is adorned with clean and elegant images. But to invent a chimerical action, and to create characters of the same type as the action, is to be an imposter rather than a poet."

> *Nesciunt qui sit Poeticae licentiae modus; quousque progredi fingendo liceat; cum officium Poetae in eo sit, ut ea quae vere geri potuerint, in alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa traducat. Totum autem quod referas fingere, id est ineptum esse et mendacem potius quam Poetam.*[5]

I am not ignoring the characters of Aristophanes' many comedies, those from *The Birds* and those of the choruses from *The Clouds*, for example, that were not allegorical.[6] But we can easily figure out the reasons why Aristophanes had to treat his subjects in this way, when we know what he wanted to imply about the most respected men of the Athenian Republic, and especially those who played the greatest part in the Peloponnesian War.[7] Those in the know were completely convinced that in his comedies Aristophanes often alluded to different events that occurred during that war. Aristophanes, who wanted to attack people more fearsome than Socrates,[8] could not therefore mask his characters or disguise his subjects too much. Such an action using allegorical characters was more appropriate to his design than ordinary characters and

4 Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, usually known as Lactantius (ca. 260–ca. 340), Christian author.

5 Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.11.24: "Humans do not know what the limit of poetic license is and how far it can proceed in creating fiction when the poet's duty is in that, so that those things which could be handled according to the truth are transferred into other guises through oblique forming with a certain charm."

6 Aristophanes (ca. 446–ca. 386 BCE), Greek playwright. In *The Birds*, birds are a key role in the action of the play. In ancient Greek plays, much of the action and background information is provided by the chorus, which was comprised of a group of several actors (as few as 12 and as many as 50), often dressed in masks.

7 The Peloponnesian War, which occurred during Aristophanes' lifetime (431–404 BC), pitted Athens against Sparta's Peloponnesian League.

8 Socrates (ca. 470–399 BC), a founder of Western philosophy.

action. Moreover, his last three comedies, at least following the order in which they have been arranged, have a human, *vraisemblable* action for their subject. The French were mistaken, as were others, on the nature of drama when they began to make dramatic pieces that deserve to be known.

They believe, then, that allegorical actions could be subjects of comedy. There was a piece presented at the marriage of Philibert Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy,[9] and the sister of our King Henry II,[10] whose action is purely allegorical. Paris appears as the father of three daughters that he wants to marry off, and these three daughters were personified as the three main quarters of the City of Paris: the University, the Town (*Ville*) properly speaking, and the City (*Cité*).[11] But either reason or instinct has made us rightly abandon this taste for making good authors compose bad pieces. And the poets who have wanted to renew this taste for several years have not succeeded. Allegorical actions are only suitable for the prologues of operas intended to serve as a kind of preface to tragedy and for teaching the application of its moral. Quinault showed how one must treat the allegorical actions and make allusions to events contemporaneous with prologues.[12]

9 Emmanuel Philibert (1528–1580), Duke of Savoy.

10 Margaret of France, or Marguerite de Valois (1523–1574), daughter of King Frances I, sister of King Henry II of France, and wife of Philibert Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy.

11 Du Bos refers to an *epithalamium* (a poem in celebration of a marriage) by Joachim du Bellay (ca. 1522–1560), French poet and critic. Du Bellay was a member of the Pléiades, a group of 16th-century French poets. His principal patron was Margaret of France. See Winifred Stephens, *Margaret of France: Duchess of Savoy 1523–1574* (London: 1912), 195.

12 Many of the libretti that Quinault wrote for Lully included a prologue. Often these were allegorical praises of Louis XIV.

CHAPTER 26

That Painters' Subjects Are Not Exhausted. Examples Drawn from Pictures of the Crucifixion.

Some people complain that the predecessors of contemporary painters and poets have exhausted all of the subjects. Artists themselves often complain, but I believe that it is wrong. A little reflection will show that, when one charges that new works by artists working today are not original, the artists ought not to be excused on the grounds of a shortage of subjects. Nature is so varied that it always provides new subjects to those with genius.

A person born with genius sees nature, which art imitates, with eyes that differ from those of persons without genius. He discovers infinite differences between objects which, to the eyes of other people, appear the same. He makes these differences so clearly apparent in his imitation that the stalest subject becomes new under his pen or paintbrush. A great painter has an infinity of different joys and sorrows and he knows how to vary it according to ages, temperaments, national characters, individual characters, and in a thousand other ways. Just as a picture only represents an instant of an event, a painter born with genius choses the instant that others have not grasped. Or, if he takes the same instant, he enriches it with circumstances drawn from his imagination, making the event appear fresh. For artistry of painting is the invention of these circumstances. How many crucifixions have been done since the beginning of paintings? However, artists gifted with genius have not found that the subject has been exhausted by the thousand pictures already executed. They know how to adorn it with new touches of artistry that, nevertheless, seem so appropriate to the subject that we are surprised that the first painter who contemplated the arrangement of a crucifixion did not seize these ideas.

Such is the picture by Rubens seen on the high altar of the Franciscans at Antwerp.[1] Christ appears between the two thieves, who are still alive. The good thief looks to heaven with a confidence based on the works of Christ. This confidence is noticeable despite the pain of torture. Without putting devils beside the bad thief, as had several previous painters, Rubens has made him an object of horror. To achieve this, Rubens employs the details, which we read about

1 This painting, *Christ between the Two Thieves* (ca. 1635), is now in the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_030

in the gospel, of the torture of this reprobate: to hasten his death, his bones were broken. The bruised leg of this unfortunate man shows that an executioner has already struck him with an iron bar, which the executioner holds in his hand. The impression of a heavy blow naturally makes us violently wince. Thus the bad thief stretches on his gibbet and, in the effort caused by his suffering, wrenches the leg which received the blow and pulls the head of the nail which attached his foot to the post. The head of the nail is covered with hideous spoils, torn from the flesh of the foot through which it has passed. Rubens, who knows so well how to trick the eye by the magic of his *chiaroscuro*, makes the body of the thief appear to come out of the corner of the picture with this effort. Yet, the flesh is the most real that this great colourist painted. We see the tortured head in profile and this posture makes the gaping mouth more apparent. The eyeballs have rolled up and we only see the whites, furrowed with red and bulging veins. In short, the violent action of his facial muscles nearly makes us hear the horrible cries he emits. Behind the cross are spectators who make it stand out. The spectators seem so deep in the picture that we scarcely dare believe that all of these figures are painted on the same surface.

From Rubens to Coypel[2] the subject of the crucifixion has been treated several times. However, the latter painter has produced a new design. His painting represents the moment when nature is convulsed with horror at the death of Christ, the sun is eclipsed without the interposition of the moon, and the dead issue from their graves. On one side of the picture, we see people seized by fear mixed with astonishment at the new disorder appearing in the heavens, on which their gazes are fixed. Their terror is contrasted with dread mixed with horror which strikes other spectators, in the midst of whom a corpse suddenly issues from his tomb. Coypel's conception, so appropriate to the situation of these people, displays different aspects of the same emotion, and it extends to the sublime. But, at the same time, it appears so natural that everyone imagines that he would have discovered the same conception, had he treated the same subject. Does not the Bible, most read of all books, tell us that nature was moved with horror at the death of Christ and that the dead issued from their tombs? How, one would ask, could one make a picture of the crucifixion with these terrible events without producing such a great effect? However, Poussin included in his picture of the crucifixion a body issuing from the grave without capturing the appearance of this corpse with the artistry of Coypel. But the essential character of the sublime inventions that only genius finds, which appear so linked

2 Du Bos appears to describe *The Crucifixion* (1692), a chalk drawing currently in the J. Paul Getty Museum. This drawing appears to be a preparatory sketch for a painting, but we have not been able to identify this work.

to some subject, is that it seems that they had to be the first ideas that occur to the artists who treat the subject. One sweats in vain, said Horace, trying to find inventions of the same kind, unless one has a genius similar to that of the poet whose artlessness and simplicity one aims to imitate:

> … *Ut sibi quivis*
> *speret idem, sudet multum frustraque laboret*
> *ausus idem.*
> [*Art of Poet.*][3]

The genius of La Fontaine[4] makes him discover while writing fables an infinity of touches that appear artless and suited to his subject. The first impulse of the reader is to think that he would have found these touches as well as La Fontaine, if he [the reader] had had to put the same fable in verse. This thought has long since occurred to several poets who intend to imitate La Fontaine. But it is one thing to imitate him and another to create as he did.

3 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 240–242: "… that anybody may hope for the same success, may sweat much and yet toil in vain when attempting the same."

4 Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), author of fables and one of the most popular French poets of his time; member of the Academie française. Best known for his *Fables* (1668), a collection of 239 fables.

CHAPTER 27

That Subjects Are Not Exhausted for Poets. That One Can Still Find New Characters in Comedy.

What we have just said about painting can also be said about poetry. A poet with natural genius would never admit he could not find new subjects. But I dare to suggest that he would never find any subject exhausted. Insight, that inseparable companion of genius, makes him discover new facets in subjects that we may crudely believe are overused. Genius guides every living being in their work by a particular route, as I will explain in the second part of this work. A poet guided by genius overlaps with another poet so rarely that one can say that, on the whole, they never overlap. When Corneille and Racine treated the same subject, each writing a tragedy about Berenice, they did not overlap. The plot and character of Corneille's tragedy could not be more different than Racine's. At the height of his abilities, Molière's comedies resembled Terrence's only inasmuch as both are excellent pieces. They each have their own type of beauty.

Artists born with genius borrow nothing from the works of their predecessors, but from nature itself. Nature produces more subjects than there is a variety of artistic genius. Moreover, all of these subjects are never under a single person's gaze. An artist only discovers things agreeable to his talent and which he in particular properly feels. Since his genius does not equip him with stimulating ideas regarding other subjects, they have no appeal for him. He does not see them as subjects likely to succeed. But another poet finds those subjects agreeable because his genius is of a different character. This is how Corneille and Racine discovered subjects that suited their talents, which they treated following their own character. A tragic poet with their genius could identify subjects that eluded them, and would treat subjects on stage of a very different taste than Racine or Corneille, and as far from Racine's as Corneille's. As Cicero said, in speaking of several dramatic poets famous in Greece and Rome: without resembling one another, they have equally succeeded.

> *Atque id primum in poetis cerni licet, quibus est proxima cognatio cum oratoribus: quam sunt inter sese Ennius, Pacuvius Acciusque dissimiles, quam apud Graecos Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, quamquam omnibus par paene laus in dissimili scribendi genere tribuitur.*
>
> [*On the Orat. Bk.* 3][1]

1 Cicero, *Orator* 3.27: "This can in the first instance be observed in the case of poetry, poets

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_031

Subjects who are still *alive* escape our notice. We frequently read stories about them without remarking on them, because genius does not make us see them. But these subjects would have inspired the poet who has the appropriate genius to treat them. This is why the subject of Andromachus, which never inspired Corneille, inspired Racine the moment he began to be a great poet. The subject of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which did not inspire Racine, nevertheless struck the young author.[2] What the Latin Aesop said of fables can be said of tragedies:

> … *Materiae tanta abundet copia,*
> *Labori faber ut desit, non fabro labor.*
> [*Phaedrus* 4, *fab.* 25][3]

True, as people will tell me, tragic poets could never want for subjects. Poets can include in a plot whichever characters they please, and they can even embellish their story with extraordinary events invented at will. It suffices for tragic poets to depict beautiful heads, and to make them more admirable they may, up to a point, deviate from the proportions that nature normally observes. But the comic poet must make portraits in which we recognize people from our midst. We mock the personality that he gives to his characters if we do not recognize them as natural. Molière and some of his successors have taken all of the real and natural characters. The tragic poet can indeed invent new personalities, but the comic poet can only copy people's personalities. The subjects of comedy are exhausted.

My reply to this is that Molière and his imitators have only put on stage a fraction of the characters suitable for making the subject of a comedy. The minds and personalities of people are like their faces. People's faces are always composed of the same parts: two eyes, a mouth, etc. Yet all faces are different because they are composed differently. But people's personalities are not

---

being the next of kin to orators; what a difference there is between Ennius, Pacuvius and Accius, and in Greece between Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, although all of them win almost equal applause in their various styles of writing."

2 *Iphigenia in Tauris* was originally written by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides. Throughout the 18th century it became increasingly popular to rewrite this story, both in poetry and opera.

3 Phaedrus, *Fables* 3.6–7: "… the supply of raw material at hand is so copious that, although it may go begging for want of an artist to work it up, no such artist will be in want of materials with which to work." Gaius Julius Phaedrus (fl. 1st century), usually known as Phaedrus, Roman fabulist who translated Aesop's fables from Greek prose into Latin verse.

merely composed differently; they are not even always composed of the same parts. I mean the same vices, virtues, and projects are not parts of their characters. As such, people's characters must be more varied and different than people's faces.

Whoever speaks of a character speaks of a mixture, a composite of many faults and virtues. In this mixture a certain vice dominates if the character is vicious, whereas virtue dominates if the character is virtuous. In this way, different human characters are varied by this mixture of faults, vices, virtues, and capacities combined differently, such that two characters that are perfectly similar are rarer in nature than two entirely similar faces.

Every well-depicted personality makes a good comic character. He can successfully play a role on stage, either major or minor. Why would love be the privileged passion, and the only one that creates distinctions among characters, with the assistance that diversity that age, sex, and profession adds to the sentiments of lovers? Could the character of a miser not be varied even by age, by sex, by other passions, and by profession? We never tire of these well-depicted personalities because they are in nature, and an artless depiction of nature is always pleasing. Writers of comedy do know how to put new characters in the theatre because their eyes are not good enough to read Nature, to sort out the different causes of the same actions, and to see how the same causes act differently on each individual. Nowhere near all human folly has been rendered in comedy.

But, someone will ask, "What are the new characters that have not yet been treated?" I reply that I could try to indicate some, if I had genius approaching Terence or Molière, but I am like those of whom Boileau spoke in these verses:

> *La Nature féconde en bizarres portraits*
> *Dans chaque Ame est marquée à de différens traits,*
> *Un geste la découvre, un rien la fait paroître,*
> *Mait tout mortel n'a pas des yeux pour la connoître.*[4]

To sort out what can create a character, one must be capable of discerning from among the twenty or thirty things that a person says or does three or four traits that are essential his particular character. One must bring these traits together

4 Boileau, *The Art of Poetry* 233–235:
> Nature abounds in bizarre portraits
> In each soul are marked different traits,
> A gesture discovers it, nothing makes it appear,
> But every mortal has only two eyes making it clear.

and, continuing to study one's model, extract, so to speak, the actions and speech patterns most suitable for making the portrait recognizable. These are the characteristics that distinguish the things that everyone says, and that make them more or less similar to one another. Collected and combined together, they create a character and give it, so to speak, its theatrical fullness. To limited minds, all people appear the same. To broader minds, people appear different from one another. But for the born comic genius, people are completely original beings.

All portraits of mediocre painters are placed in the same category. They have the same demeanour because these painters lack the vision to discern each person's distinct natural demeanour and to give each person in his portrait individuality. A skillful painter has the ability to create the endless variety of the natural. Thus the countenance and actions of the people that he depicts are always varied. Experience helps a great deal in finding the real difference between people, which at first glance appear to be the same to us. Those seeing Negroes for the first time believe that all of their faces are nearly the same; but looking at them more carefully, they find Negro faces just as different among them as are the faces of white people.[5] This is why Molière at fifty years of age found more individuality among people than he was able to find when he was not yet forty years old. I return to my main position, that it does not follow that all comedic subjects have been exhausted. People who have no genius for comedy and who have not studied people by the means that Comedy must study them, are not able to identify anything new.

Most people are highly capable of recognizing a character when it has received its theatrical form and fullness. But only those born with a genius for comedy are able to distinguish a character's appropriate traits, and what should be used in its design, when they remain submerged and mixed in an infinity of words and actions. Mores, fashion, dress, profession, and interests make everyone have approximately the same air, and a manner so uniform that their characters vary only imperceptibly. Only comic geniuses can say which personality will result from these traits, if these traits were to be detached from certain actions and dialogues, or if they approached each other and were immediately combined. In short, discerning characters in nature requires inventiveness. Thus the person who is born without comic genius does not know how to sort them out, just as someone born without a genius for painting cannot discern the appropriate objects in nature to be painted. *Quam multa vident Pictores in*

5 'Negro' was the term used to refer to people of African descent during this period. It would not have been considered an offensive or inappropriate designation.

umbris, et in eminentia, quae nos non videmus [*Acad. Quest*. bk. 4].[6] How many things does a painter see in a flash that our eyes could never see, said Cicero.

I conclude that for the painters and poets who owe their vocation to the arts they practice to genius, and not to the need to make a living, will always finds new subjects in nature. To speak figuratively, their predecessors have left them more marble in the quarry than they were able to remove and to use in their work.

6 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism* 2.7.20: "How many things painters see in shadows and in the foreground which we do not see!"

CHAPTER 28

On *Vraisemblance* in Poetry.

The first rule that painters and poets are required to observe, in treating the subject they have chosen, is to include nothing contrary to *vraisemblance*. People would scarcely be touched by an event that appears palpably impossible to them. Poets, like painters who treat historical facts, may omit a part of the truth. Both can add to the facts some incidents of their own invention:

Ficta potes multa addere veris,

said Vida.[1] Poets and painters who do this are not liars. Fiction only amounts to lying in works that are presented as nothing but the truth about things. Something will be a lie in the history of Charles VII but not in the poem, *The Maid*. Thus the poet, who makes up a honourable story to make his hero greater, is not an impostor while the historian who did the same thing would be one. We have nothing with which to reproach a poet if his invention does not offend *vraisemblance* and if the facts that he imagines could really have happened. Let us first speak of *vraisemblance* in poetry.

A *vraisemblable* fact is a fact that is possible in the circumstances in which it occurs. Whatever is impossible in these circumstances would not appear *vraisemblable*. Here I do not mean by 'impossible' whatever is beyond human capacity, but rather whatever seems impossible, given all of the assumptions the poet makes. The poet is within his rights to require us to find possible everything that is possible in the time where the scene is set, to which he somehow transports his readers. We cannot, for example, accuse him of lacking *vraisemblance* in imagining that Diana takes Iphigenia, when she was about to be sacrificed, and transports her to Tauris.[2] The event was possible according to Greek theology of that time.

Having said this, let people hardier than me dare to mark the border between the *vraisemblable* and the marvelous. And draw the border relative to each genre of poetry, relative to the time at which an event is supposed to have occurred, and relative to the approximate beliefs of those for whom the poem is written. It seems to me to be too difficult to draw these borders. On the one

1 Vida, *On the Art of Poetry* 2.345: "You can add many fictions to truths."

2 Du Bos alludes to the version of the Iphigenia story, told in Racine's *Iphigénia* (1647), in which Artemis (Diana) rescues the heroine.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_032

hand, people are not touched by events that cease to be *vraisemblable* because they are too marvelous. On the other hand, events so *vraisemblable* that they cease to be marvelous scarcely grab peoples' attention. As with events, so with sentiments. Sentiments that are not marvelous (either from their nobility or the way that they are conveyed with precision of thought or accuracy of expression) appear flat. Everyone, we say, would have thought that. On the other hand, sentiments that are too marvelous appear false and outré. Du Ryer has Sevola, in the tragedy of that name, say to Porsenna, who intended to starve the Romans, that the Romans

> *Se nourrira d'un bras, et combattra de l'autre*.[3]

Exaggeration makes these sentiments as comical as any of Ariosto's fancies.

So teaching the art of reconciling *vraisemblance* and the marvelous does not seem possible to me. This art is only within range of those who are born poets and great poets. Only they can make an alliance between the marvelous and the *vraisemblable* in which neither loses its rights. The ability to make such an alliance is what chiefly distinguishes poets in the class of Virgil from poetasters without imagination and ostentatious poets. This is what distinguishes illustrious poets from dull authors and the producers of Romances of Chivalry such as *Amadís*.[4] The latter certainly do not lack the marvelous. On the contrary, they are full of marvels. But their inventions are without *vraisemblance* and excessively prodigious events disgust readers who have cultivated taste and are familiar with judicious authors.

A poem that offends against *vraisemblance* is all the more blameworthy since it is apparent to everyone. We have a tragedy of Quinault, entitled *The False Tiberinus*,[5] in which the poet supposes that Tiberinus of Alba has died in an expedition. In order to prevent his troops from becoming discouraged, one of his generals conceals from them knowledge about the King's death. The better to conceal his death, the general had his son impersonate King Tiberinus. This is facilitated by a close resemblance between the King and Agrippa, the son who passes for Tiberinus. In order to conceal the imposture more effectively, his

3 Du Bos refers to the play *Scévole* (ca. 1644) by Pierre Du Ryer (1606–1658), French dramatist, 1.4. In his day he was a popular and prolific playwright. "We will eat one arm and fight with the other."

4 *Amadís de Gaula* is an old Spanish chivalric romance that originated in the early 14th century. Its earliest surviving version was printed in 1515 by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, who claims to have revised the first three volumes and to have written the fourth.

5 Quinault, *Agrippa roy d'Albe ou le faux Tiberinus* (1661).

father pretends that the dead King had secretly killed Agrippa. The entire Kingdom of Alba is taken in for a year. The dénouement of the play, which provides act after act of marvelous situations, is very engaging. However, this tragedy will never be counted among those that do honour to our stage. It touches us by the unexpected and we disavow our emotion when we reflect on the extravagance of the play's premise, on which all of the marvelous situations of the tragedy are based. We received almost no pleasure from seeing a play that supposes that the resemblance between King Tiberinius and Agrippa was so absolutely perfect, even with respect to their minds, that Agrippa's lover, after a long conversation with him, continues to take him for Tiberinus.

However, I will avow that a poem without marvels would displease me even more than a poem based on a premise without *vraisemblance*. In this, I am of the opinion of Boileau, who prefers Cyrano's trip to the moon[6] to the unimaginative poems of Motin[7] and Cotin.[8]

Nothing undermines *vraisemblance* more than an audience member's certain knowledge that some event did not happen as the poet describes. Consequently, I believe that poets who contradict well-known historical facts in their works seriously harm the *vraisemblance* of their fictions. I am fully aware that sometimes the false is more *vraisemblable* than the true. But our beliefs about facts are not in proportion to their metaphysical *vraisemblance* or their possibility; rather our beliefs are in proportion to the historical probability of the facts. We do not ask what will most probably happen. Instead, we ask what the witnesses imply and the historians report. Their reports and not the *vraisemblance* of the reports determine what we believe. Thus we do not believe in the event that is the most probable and the most possible. Rather, we believe what historians tell us really happened. Their statements being the basis of our belief in the facts, whatever is contrary to their statements cannot appear to have *vraisemblance*. For, as truth is the soul of history, *vraisemblance* is the soul of poetry.

6 *Histoire Comique par Monsieur de Cyrano Bergerac, Contenant les Estats & Empires de la Lune* [Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon] (1657), by Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655), French libertine, novelist, playwright, and swordsman.

7 Pierre Motin (1566–1612), French poet.

8 Charles Cotin (1604–1682), French scholar, abbot, poet, and member of the Academie française. He was widely respected in his day for his sermons, learning, and poetry, but is parodied as the character Trissotin in Molière's *Les Femmes savantes* (1672).

CHAPTER 29

Whether the Tragic Poets Are Obliged to Conform to Geography, History, and the Chronology That We Know with Certainty. Remarks on This Subject on Some Tragedies by Corneille and Racine.

I believe that a tragic poet compromises his art when he sins too greatly against history, chronology, and geography in advancing facts that are contradicted by these sciences.[1] The more widely known this contradiction is, the more harmful it is to his work. The public rarely pardons such faults, once it knows them. And it never excuses them so fully that the work is not admired a little less.

A poet should not make Cyrus save the life of Tomyris,[2] nor make Caesar kill Brutus. I believe that the same respect is owed to a universally established story as to history. The myth puts us under an obligation to its gods and heroes: they have the right to pass as real in the poems, and then narratives can no longer be contradicted. Without some pressing need, a poet should not change a thing about what history or a story says about events, manners, clothing, and local customs.

What I am talking about does not concern little known facts of trifling importance. For example, it would be pedantic to reprimand Racine for having made Narcissus, in *Britannicus*,[3] say that Locusta, that famous poisoner in

1 During this period, history and geography were classified as 'Historical Sciences.' This is contrasted with other areas of science, including the Moral Sciences and Natural Sciences.

2 Queen Tomyris was an Iranian-born leader who ruled over an area of Central Asia known as the Massagetae in the 6th century BC. That Queen Tomyris is Iranian-born is deduced, first, from the etymology of her name, which is Iranian; and second, from the location of Massagetae. Herodotus reports that they dwelled beyond the Araxes, which would put them around the areas of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Ancient historians such as Herodotus and Strabo recount her defeat of the Persian king Cyrus the Great, which purportedly ended in his death. A painting by Rubens, *Tomyris Plunges the Head of the Dead Cyrus into a Vessel of Blood* (ca. 1622–1623) draws from one version of Cyrus' death. After having captured and then persuaded Tomyris' son, Spargapises, to commit suicide, Tomyris seeks her revenge by allegedly beheading Cyrus and stuffing his head into a wineskin. The painting is currently in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

3 When Agrippina marries the emperor Claudius in 49 BC, her son Lucius—the future emperor Nero—and Claudius' son Britannicus become step-brothers. But when Nero falls in love with

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_033

Nero's day,[4] killed a slave before her eyes to test the effects of the poison she prepared for Britannicus, just because historians claim that this test was performed on a pig. The detail changed by the poet is not so important to keep it at the expense of the emotion generated by sacrificing a man's life for an experiment. But at the same time, because we actually know the manners of that period and the history of Nero, I would not blame those who might reprimand Racine for many other, utterly false things in this same piece.

Junia Calvina,[5] Britannicus' lover, whom the poet takes care to describe in the Preface fearing we might confuse her with Junia Silana,[6] was not in Rome at the time of Britannicus' death. It is not possible that the person he put on stage could have been a character in the real events. Junia Calvina was exiled near the end of the reign of Claudius, guilty of incest with her brother.[7] Nero only brought her back from exile when he wanted to display acts of clemency, mollifying those who were embittered against him for the murder of his mother. Besides, the character that Racine happily assigned to this Julia Calvina is completely false according to history. He depicted her as a young, virtuous girl; and more than once he made her say in poetic phrases that she has not seen the world and that she knows nothing.

Tacitus, who must have seen Junia Calvina since she was living under Vespasian's reign, describes her in the *History of Claudius* as cheeky [Tacitus, *An. Lib*. XII].[8] Before Claudius married Agrippina, and more than seven years

---

Britannicus' financée Junia Calvina, Nero sets out to murder Britannicus and ensure his own ascension to emperor.

4 Locusta was one of three female poisoners in 1st century AD Rome. In Racine's play *Britannicus*, she is depicted as being summoned to prepare the poison for two plotted murders, that of emperor Claudius at the hands of Agrippina, and that of Britannicus at the hands of Nero. There are several historical accounts of this famous poisoner, including Tacitus' *Annals* and Suetonius' *Life of Nero*.

5 The real Junia Calvina, great-great-grand-daughter of Roman emperor Caesar Augustus, lived in the 1st century CE and married Lucius Vitellius (ca. AD 16–69), a younger brother of emperor Aulus Vitellius. Tacitus is Racine's source for this name, although the details of her life are heavily distorted by him, as Du Bos explains.

6 Junia Silana (fl. early 1st century AD) was the daughter of another Roman nobleman named Marcus Junius Silanus (AD 16–64), who was ordered to commit suicide by Nero for having bragged about being a descendant of Augustus. She was alive and in the circle of noblemen and women during the period depicted by Racine, and encountered Agrippina when she discouraged Junia from marrying Titus Sextius Africanus (ca. AD 59).

7 Junia's brother, Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus, killed himself because of this allegation of incest. The event led Junia and Lucius Vitellius to divorce. Emperor Claudius commanded that she be exiled from Rome but, as Du Bos explains, Nero commanded her return ten years later.

8 Tacitus, *Annals* 12.4.

before Britannicus' death, she was married to Lucius Vitellius, the brother of Vitellius who became the next emperor. In his ingenious satire written on the death of emperor Claudius, Seneca speaks of Junia Calvina as a person he believed truly capable of the crime of incest with her own brother, and for which she was exiled during the emperor's reign. Racine reports one part of Seneca's passage in a way that suggests that he did not read the whole thing. He cites the expression Seneca uses to say that she was "the most cheerful young person of her day," *Festivissimam omnium puellarum*.[9] But Racine does not tell us what Seneca adds: that although Junia Calvina appeared a Venus to everyone,[10] her brother preferred instead to make her his Juno.[11] Everyone knows that Juno was simultaneously Jupiter's sister and his wife. In the Preface, Racine suggests that it was only Junia Calvina's age that prevented her from being received by the Vestals, since he wanted to make her reception into that College *vraisemblable*, by having people give her a dispensation for her age. This would be a ridiculous outcome considering that, at that time, people no longer made laws. Beyond the fact that Junia Calvina was too old to be received among the Vestals, there are further reasons that would make her reception into their College impossible. This fact is contradicted by everything historians teach us about Junia Calvina's life. I also do not think that Racine was permitted to resuscitate Narcissus, a character as famous in Roman history as the most famous consuls, and make him one of the actors in his drama. Tacitus teaches us that, as early as the first days of Nero's reign, Agrippina compelled this famous man to kill himself.

In *Britannicus* we find several other mistakes similar to those that I have just brought to light, but there are even more in the tragedy of *Berenice*. Through Titus, Racine expanded the scope of the Queen's territories. On twenty occasions in the drama he spoke about Berenice's dominions, yet that princess had neither kingdom nor principality. We would call her 'Queen' only if she were married to a sovereign, or if she were the daughter of a king. The practice of calling the daughter of the king 'Queen' is fashionable in many countries, including

9 Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 8: "most charming of all girls."

10 Loved and revered by Romans, Venus is the goddess of love, beauty, and sexual desire. She *could* be considered the mother of the Romans due to her being identified with Aphrodite (the mother of Aeneas, who is acknowledged, alongside his Trojans, by the Romans as their ancestors).

11 In Roman mythology, Juno is the goddess of marriage and childbirth. Her husband and brother are one and the same, namely Jupiter, the God of the sky and thunder, as well as the chief Roman god. Their parallels in Greek mythology are Hera and Zeus.

France [*L'Oyseau des Ordres*, ch. XI, § 34].[12] Racine supposes that his Antiochus, wounded in a battle between Otho's[13] and Vitellius'[14] soldiers, and who brought aid to the Romans before Jerusalem, was King of Comagena[15] under the Empire of Titus,[16] even though historians tell us that this unfortunate prince's father was the last King of Commagene. Under the rule of Vespasian,[17] Titus' father and predecessor, he was suspected of spying on behalf of the Parthians.[18] With his sons, of whom Racine's Antiochus was one, he was forced to seek refuge among the Parthians to avoid falling into the hands of Ceasennius Paetus,[19] who had ordered their return. Paetus took possession of Commagene, which since that time has been reduced to a province of the empire. Since the time of Titus' advancement to the throne, Antiochus Epiphanus[20] remained a refugee among the Parthians, no longer King of Commagene. Our poet once again sins against truth when he makes Paulin say that Titus, as his confidant, commands that he speak to him about Berenice's marriage. We see him say:

Des fers de Claudius Felix encore flétri
De deux Reines, Seigneur, devenir le mari,

12 Charles Loyseau (1564–1627), French jurist. His *Traités des ordres et simples dignités* (1613) [Treatise on Orders and Simple Dignities] was a description of the various social ranks in France during the *ancien régime*.

13 Marcus Salvius Otho Caesar Augustus (AD 32–69), the second short-term emperor of Rome in AD 69.

14 Aulus Vitellius Germanicus Augustus (AD 15–69) was the third short-term emperor of Rome in 69 CE, and was succeeded by Vespasian, who ordered his execution.

15 Comagena was a Roman camp situated on the bank of the Danube in Lower Austria.

16 Titus Flavius Caesar Vespasianus (AD 39–81), the emperor of Rome from AD 79–81. He plays a character in *Berenice* because he was involved in a controversial romantic relationship with the Jewish queen Berenice during the time of the Jewish-Roman war.

17 The senior Titus Flavius Caesar Vespasianus Augustus (AD 9–79), preceded his son as Roman emperor from AD 69–79, and was best known for his military success in a dangerous and tumultuous time. Nero's efforts had led to a civil war, and after Nero died by his own hand there were two further emperors in quick succession. Vespasian was the fourth and most successful in 69 AD—the so-called 'Year of the Four Emperors.'

18 The Parthian Empire (founded 247 BC) at its greatest extent stretched from the Mediterranean to India. It was an important rival of the Roman Empire.

19 Lucius Junius Caesennius Paetus (fl. AD 61), an influential Roman aristocrat, serving under both Nero's and Vespasian's reigns. He led but lost the Battle of Rhandeia against the Parthians.

20 Gaius Julius Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. AD 38–72), the last King of Commagene, a small kingdom of Seleucid origin, located on the west bank of the upper Euphrates between Armenia and Cilicia. Once a favourite companion of the Roman emperor Caligula, Antiochus reigned over Commagene. He married his sister, Iotapa, and was closely associated with powerful political circles throughout his lifetime.

Et s'il faut jusqu'au bout que je vous obéisse,
Ces deux Reines étoient du sang de Bérénice.[21]

This Felix, well known to Tacitus and Josephus,[22] married Drusilla,[23] a queen or daughter of royal blood. True, she was related to Berenice: she was her own sister. Some people censured Racine for having made so many mistakes that contradict such a widely reported and well-known history as that of the first Roman emperors, and for falling into geographic errors that he could have avoided. I would not want to accuse them of being pedantic. For example, Racine makes Mithridates guilty of an error by making him say to his sons, while explaining his plans to travel to Italy and overtake Rome:[24]

Doutez-vous que l'Euxin ne me porte en deux jours
Aux lieux où le Danube y vient finit son cours?[25]

They may well doubt it, because it is completely impossible, says an emperor who commanded armies on the banks of the Danube and who, like Mithridates, preserved his reputation as a great general in the changing winds of fortune. Setting out from the region of Asaph and the strait of Cassa, where Racine

21 *Berenice* 2.2, 405–408:
Felix, still bearing the marks of Claudius' chains,
Became, my lord, the husband of two queens,
And if it is necessary to obey you to the end,
These two queens were of Berenice's blood.

22 Flavius Josephus (AD 37/38–100), whose name originally was Joseph Ben Matthias, was an historian who is known for his work on Jewish history, such as *History of the Jewish War* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

23 Drusilla (AD 38–79) was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, the King of Judaea from AD 41 to 44. At six years old, she was promised by her father in marriage to Antiochus Epiphanes, the son of the last king of Commagene, on the condition that he converts to Judaism. But after this marriage, Drusilla, who is characterized as being a great beauty—provoking the envy of her sister Berenice—attracted the attention of the cruel and severe Roman procurator of Judea, Marcus Antonius Felix (ca. AD 10–after 58). The marriage contract ceased when the prince refused to uphold his end of the deal. Drusilla probably died at Pompeii in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, along with her son.

24 Du Bos refers to *Mithridates*, a tragedy written by Racine in 1673. The play depicts the intrigues of Mithridates VI (ca. 132–74 BC), King of Pontus, a large region in modern-day Turkey. The action depicted here is the Third Mithridatic War (73–63 BC), which turned out in favour of Rome.

25 Racine, *Mithridates* 3.1, 997–998:
Do you doubt that the Black Sea will carry me in two days
To the places where the Danube ends its course?

sets the scene of his piece, Mithridates' naval fleet had nearly three leagues to travel before disembarking on the banks of the Danube.[26] There is no guarantee that the vessels that navigate the water in fleet formation, having no means of advancing other than by oars and sails, could make this trip in fewer than eight or ten days. Without fear of stripping Mithridates' enterprise of the marvellous, Racine could well have assigned six months to march his army seven hundred leagues to Rome. The line he makes Mithridates say,

Je vous rends dans trois mois aux pieds du Capitole[27]

offends anyone with any knowledge of the distance of a league. Even if the Greek and Roman armies marched much more quickly than our own, no single troop could ever travel close to eight leagues every day for three months, without stopping to rest, everywhere passing through difficult, enemy lands, or at least suspicious ones, as were the majority of lands Mithridates had to traverse. These sorts of criticisms circulate especially when a piece is new, and they often harm a poet's reputation more than they ought.

Corneille frequently falls into the same errors as Racine. I cite only one example: it is what Nicomedes, the Ambassador of Rome, said to Flaminius, his father and the Prussian King.[28] After having made the Ambassador remember that Hannibal[29] won the Battle of Trasimene against Flaminius,[30] Nicomedes warned him again not to forget,

---

26 A league is a measure of distance commonly used in the past. In ancient Rome, a league was equivalent to approximately 2.2 kilometres or 1.4 miles. This distance was referred to in Rome as one and a half Roman miles. See John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler Figg (eds.), *Trade, Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An encyclopedia* (New York: 2000).

27 Racine, *Mithridates* 3.1, 996: "I will bring you to the capital by foot in three months."

28 Du Bos refers to the tragic play by Pierre Corneille staged in the 1650s called *Nicomède*. Its main characters are Prusias, the King of Bithynia (a Roman province in Asia Minor whose capital was Nicomedia, named after Nicomedes I in 264 BC), the Roman Ambassador Flaminius, and Laodice, the Queen of Armenia. The principal action, however, takes place between Prusias' two sons and half-brothers, Nicomedes and Attalus. Each portrays clashing ideals between loyalty to the aristocracy of Rome and duty to the political state.

29 Hannibal Barca (247–183 BC) was one of the most famous military commanders in ancient history. Born in Carthage, the dominant naval force during the time, Hannibal was responsible for starting the Second Punic War. Du Bos refers to Hannibal's other successful military exploits, including the battles at Trebia and Cannae.

30 The Battle of Lake Trasimene took place in June 217 BC. It is well-chronicled by Roman historian Livy and Greek historian Polybius. Considered one of the largest ambushes in military history, this battle saw more than fifty per cent of Gaius Flaminius' army cut down by Hannibal's soldiers.

Qu'autrefois ce grand homme
Commença par son pere à triompher de Rome.[31]

But Titus Quintus Flamininus,[32] the person to whom Nicomedes was speaking, and who had prevented Hannibal from having access to poison, was not the son of the man who lost the battle of Trasimene against Hannibal. They were from different families and even races. The Flamininus defeated at Trasimene was a common man; and the Flamininus who was Ambassador of the Republic of Prussia, and who caused the death of Hannibal,[33] was a nobleman. Besides, the Battle of Trasimene was not Hannibal's first successful exploit in Italy. It was preceded by the Battle of Trebia, and by the famous fight with Tesin, that the Carthaginian General had already won when he fought Flamininus near the Lake of Perouse. It is a mystery why Corneille confused the two Flamininuses, since those in the know have long criticized the author of the life of *Famous Men*, who wrote under the name "Aurelius Victor."[34]

True, Greek tragedies have often made similar mistakes, but this does not excuse modern authors, all the more so because art should at least be more accurate today. Moreover, we have always criticized Greek tragic poets for mistakes that harm the *vraisemblance* of their claims, combatting truths that are certain and well known. In the following quotation, Paterculus criticized these poets for the major error of having named Thessaly a part of Greece at a time when it did not bear this name.

Quo nomine mirari convenit eos, qui, Iliaca componentes tempora, de ea regione ut Thessalia commemorant; quod cum alii faciant tragici frequentissime

---

31 Corneille, *Nicomède* Act II, scene 3:
That by his father's blood, that mighty man
His triumphs over the Roman state began.

32 Titus Quinctius Flamininus (ca. 229–ca. 174 BC) was a Roman politician. As a general, he played a major role in the Roman conquest of Greece, defeating Philip V of Macedon and forcing him to relinquish all Greek cities.

33 Flamininus was not directly responsible for the death of Hannibal, although he played a major part in the event. Working with Prusius I of Bithynia in 183 BC, they endeavoured to capture Hannibal, but were left empty-handed after Hannibal took his own life.

34 Sextus Aurelius Victor (ca. 320–ca. 390), Roman historian and politician, was the author of a number of volumes, but not *On Famous Roman Men* [De Viris Illustribus Romae]. This volume was published alongside a number of others to comprise a history of Rome (*Historia Romana*). The volume in question was re-published during the Renaissance under the name of the more famous Pliny the Younger. The republication of *De Viris Illustribus Romae*, in part motivated by the medieval hagiographical tradition, inspired a number of new biographies. See Michael M. Sage, "The *'De viris illustribus'*: Authorship and Date," *Hermes* 108.1 (1980), 83–100.

faciunt, quibus minime id concedendum est, nihil enim ex persona poetae, sed omnia sub eorum, qui illo tempore vixerunt, dixerunt [*Lib. Prim. Hist.*].[35] In effect, it is so much more shocking for the tragic poet who makes a character commit a mistake at a time when this would not have been possible. This opinion is confirmed by what Aristotle says about the need to preserve historical *vraisemblance* in poems [*Poetic*. Ch. 25].[36] He accuses those who feign correctness in conforming to truth as a useless affectation. For this he criticizes Sophocles, who in his tragedy *Electra* claimed that Orestes was killed at the Pythian Games, yet these games were not instituted until several centuries after Orestes' life.[37] But it is easier for poets to treat this meticulousness as pedantry than it is to acquire the knowledge necessary for avoiding mistakes such as those for which Aristotle criticized Sophocles.

35 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 1.2: "On this account, one has a right to be surprised that writers who deal with the times of the Trojan war speak of this region as Thessaly. This is a common practice, but especially among the tragic poets, for whom less allowance should be made; for the poets do not speak in person, but entirely through mouths of characters who lived in the times referred to."

36 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b: "It is clear, then, from what we have said that the poet must be a 'maker' not of verses but of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his 'representation,' and what he represents is action. Even supposing he represents what has actually happened, he is none the less a poet, for there is nothing to prevent some actual occurrences being the sort of thing that would probably or inevitably happen, and it is in virtue of that that he is their 'maker.'"

37 Sophocles (ca. 496–406 BC), great ancient Greek tragedian. He was the author of *Electra*. Electra and her brother seek vengeance for the death of their father, Agamemnon, at the hands of their mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. Electra is the sister of Iphigenia, who was killed by her father Agamemnon before the Trojan War. Sophocles' drama takes place after the end of that war. Aristotle's criticism is leveled in his *Poetics* 1460a: "The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the play (as, in the Oedipus, the hero's ignorance as to the manner of Laius' death); not within the drama—as in the Electra, the messenger's account of the Pythian games …"

CHAPTER 30

Of *Vraisemblance* in Painting and of the Regard That Painters Owe to Received Tradition.

There are two sorts of *vraisemblance* in painting: poetic and mechanical. Mechanical *vraisemblance* consists in not representing anything impossible, according to the laws of physics and the laws of optics.

Thus, mechanical *vraisemblance* consists in not giving to light powers that it does not have in nature. For example, not making light illuminate bodies when interposed bodies prevent it from falling on them. It consists in not noticeably changing the natural proportions of bodies and not giving them more power than it is possible for them to have. A painter violates these laws if he shows a person in a posture, in which he can only employ half of his strength, lift a load that he could scarcely shift if he had full use of his strength. Even less may he make a person carry a section of column, or some other burden so excessively heavy, that it was beyond the strength of a Hercules. But if we suppose, someone might say, that this person is a good or evil genius, endowed with powers more than human, then *vraisemblance* will not suffer. To this I reply that the painter may have reason on his side, but he will have the senses against him. Which must he primarily please? I will say no more about mechanical *vraisemblance* because its very detailed rules are found in books devoted to the art of painting.[1]

Poetic *vraisemblance* consists in giving to characters passions that are appropriate to their age, their social class, the temperament they are given, and the interest that they are supposed to take in the events. It consists in observing in one's picture what the Italians call *il costume*, that is to say, one must make a painting consistent with what we know of the customs, habits, architecture, and arms of the people that one intends to represent.[2] Poetic *vraisemblance* consists, in short, in giving to the persons in a picture their features and their

1 Du Bos has in mind works such as Roland Fréart de Chambray, *L'Idée de la perfection de la peinture demonstrée par les principles de l'art* [The Idea of the Perfection of Painting demonstrated by the principles of the art] (1662).

2 The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the relevant sense of costume as "The custom, manner, or style of the period which a particular piece of art is intended to represent, considered in terms of accuracy in representation; the clothes, furnishings, and other objects appropriate to the time and place to which the scene or individual represented belongs."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_034

known characteristics, where these are known, whether these characteristics have been taken from portraits or have been imagined. We will speak before long of these known characteristics.

Whenever any spectators in a picture become participants in the action, their activity must nevertheless be proportional to the interest that they take in the event that they witness. Thus the soldier who sees the sacrifice of Iphigenia must be moved, but he must not be as moved as a brother of the victim. A woman who attends the judgement of Susanna, whom we do not recognize, by her countenance or lineaments, as a sister or mother of Susanna,[3] must not show the same degree of affliction as a relative does.

A young man must applaud with more eagerness than an elder. The two ages have different degrees of attention to the same thing. A young man must appear fully rapt by a spectacle that a man of experience must only watch with slight attention. The spectator endowed with the physiognomy of an intelligent man must not admire to the same extent as the one characterized by witless physiognomy. The astonishment of a king must not be that of a man of the people. A man who listens from afar must not appear as one who listens from nearby. A lively person neither sees nor hears in the same posture as a melancholy person. The respect and heed that the court of a Persian king displays for their master must be expressed by behavior that is not suitable for the following of a Roman consul to show for the magistrate. The terror of a slave is not that of a citizen, nor is the fear of a woman that of a soldier. A soldier who saw the heavens part would not even feel the fear of another sort of person. A great fright can render a woman immobile; but a distraught soldier must stand to arms, at least by a purely mechanical movement. A courageous man, stricken with deep sorrow, lets his suffering appear on his face, but it must not appear as it would on the face of a woman. The anger of a bilious man is not that of a melancholy man.

The high altar of the little Church of St. Stephen in Genoa has a picture by Giulio Romano, depicting the martyrdom of this saint.[4] The painter expresses perfectly well how people of differing characters behave differently when seized by the same passion. One can easily tell that this sort of execution was

3 In the Biblical Book of Daniel, Chapter 13 (a chapter considered apocryphal by Protestants), lecherous elders watch Susanna bathing. They tell her that they will say she met a young lover unless she agrees to have sex with them. She refuses and is charged with, and convicted of, promiscuity and sentenced to death. Daniel secures her release by inducing her accusers to give inconsistent testimony.

4 Giulio Romano (ca. 1499–1546), Roman painter and architect and a student of Raphael. Giorgio Vasari says of *The Stoning of St. Stephen* that "Giulio never did a finer work." Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. William Gaunt (London: 1963), vol. 3, 101.

not performed by paid executioners, but by the people themselves. One of the Israelites who stones the saint has red hair, a ruddy complex and, in short, all the signs of a bilious and sanguine man. He appears to be consumed by anger. His mouth and nostrils are stretched wide. He gesticulates like a madman and, in order to hurl his stone with more violence, stands on one foot. Another Israelite, placed behind the first, we recognize, from the meagerness of his body, his dull complexion, and black hair, to have a melancholic temperament. He coils his body in throwing his stone, aiming for the saint's head. We see that his hatred is even stronger than that of the first, though his bearing and posture are not so marked by fury. His anger towards a man condemned by law, whom he executes on religious principle, is not less despite being of a different type.

The rage of a general must not be the same as that of an ordinary soldier. In short, it is the same with all sentiments and passions. If I do not say more this is only because I have already said too much for those who have reflected on the great art of expression, while I do not say enough for those who have not reflected on it.

Poetic *vraisemblance* also consists in observation of rules that we, like the Italians, call *costume*. Observation of these rules is a great merit of Poussin's pictures. In accordance with these rules, the places where the events occur must be represented as they were, if this is known. When we do not have a precise notion of the places, we must take care not to contradict what can be known. The same rules also require that various nations that usually appear in pictures have the complexion and comportment that history attributes to them. It is even good to extend *vraisemblance* to the point of conforming to what we know of the animals native to each country, when events are represented as occurring in that country. Poussin, who has treated several events set in Egypt, nearly always puts in his paintings the buildings, trees, and animals that, for various reasons, are regarded as native to that country.

Le Brun has also carefully followed these rules in his pictures of the history of Alexander. Persians and Indians are distinguished from Greeks by their physiognomy as well as by their weapons. In conformity to the truth, the horses of the Persians are represented as more slender. I have heard Perrault say that his friend Le Brun had drawings of Persian horses made in Aleppo, in order to observe in his paintings this aspect of the *costume*. True, he was wrong about the head of Alexander in the first painting that he executed. This is the one that shows Persian queens at the feet of Alexander.[5] Someone had given Le Brun a

5 *The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander*, also called *The Tent of Darius* (ca. 1660). Collection of the Palace of Versailles.

medallion with a head of Minerva, on the reverse of which is the name Alexander. Thus this prince, contrary to what we know to be true, appears as in this picture as beautiful as a woman. But Le Brun corrected himself after he had been advised of this mistake. He has given us the true head of Alexander in his picture *The Battle of the Granicus River* and in his *Entry of Alexander into Babylon*.[6] He took the idea from the bust of this prince which is on a column in one of the groves of Versailles. A modern sculptor has disguised him as a Gallic Mars by putting a cock[7] on his helmet. This bust, as well as the column of Oriental alabaster, was brought from Alexandria.

Poetic *vraisemblance* also requires that nations be represented with their clothing, arms, and banners. We put an owl on Athenian flags, a stork on Egyptian ones, and an eagle on those of the Romans. In short, we conform to those of their customs that are relevant to the events in the picture. Thus the painter who intends to paint the death of Britannicus will not represent Nero and the others seated in front of a table; rather they will recline on couches.[8]

Our painters no longer fall into the crude error of including people in an event who could never have witnessed it, since they lived long after the event. St. Francis no longer listens to the preaching of St. Paul, nor does a confessor, crucifix in hand, exhort the good thief.

Finally, poetic *vraisemblance* requires the painter to give his characters the familiar inclination of their heads, whether this is transmitted by medallions, statues, or portraits, whether by a surviving tradition whose origin is unknown, or even by having been imagined. Although we do not know for certain what St. Peter looked like, painters and sculptors have adopted a convention of representing him with a certain inclination of the head and a certain physique, which has become appropriate for this saint. In imitation, the received and generally established conception takes the place of truth. What I have said about St. Peter applies to the physiques used to represent several other saints. It even applies to the bearing ordinarily assigned to St. Paul, even though it does not fit very well with the description this apostle gave of himself. This does not matter; the matter is decided as it is. The sculptor who would represent St. Paul as smaller, thinner, and with a beard shorter than St. Peter's would be blamed

6 *The Battle of the Granicus River* (1665) and *Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, also called *The Triumph of Alexander* (1665). Both in the Louvre.

7 A cock or rooster is a symbol of France.

8 Tiberius Claudius Caesar Britannicus (AD 41–54), son of the Roman emperor Claudius. Claudius was succeeded by his great-nephew, Nero, whom he had adopted. Britannicus survived only a few months of his brother's reign, before he was poisoned at a dinner party. Romans reclined on couches at dinner parties and did not sit at tables.

[*repris*] as much as Bandinelli[9] was for having put beside the statue of Adam, that he had made for the Duomo in Florence, a statue of Eve taller than that of her husband.[10]

We see from the *Letters* of Sidonius Apollinaris that the illustrious philosophers of antiquity also each have in painting their own *air de tête*, bearing, and gesture. *Per gymnasia pingantur Areopagitica vel prytanea curva cervice Speusippus Aratus panda, Zenon fronte contracta Epicurus cute distenta, Diogenes barba comante Socrates coma cadente, Aristoteles brachio exerto Xenocrates crure collecto, Heraclitus fletu oculis clausis Democritus risu labris apertis, Chrysippus digitis propter numerorum indicia constrictis, Euclides propter mensurarum spatia laxatis, Cleanthes propter utrumque corrosis* [Book 9, Letter 9].[11] Raphael made good use of this erudition in his painting, *The School of Athens*. We also learn from Quintilian that ancient painters tended to give to their gods and heroes the physiognomy and the same character that Zeuxis[12] had given them, which earned him the name Law Giver. *Ille vero ita circumscripsit omnia, ut eum legum latorem vocent, quia deorum atque heroum effigies, quales ab eo sunt traditae, ceteri, tanquam ita necesse sit, sequuntur* [Quintilian] *Instit.* bk. 12.10].[13]

---

9 Bartolommeo Bandinelli (1493–1560), Italian sculptor and painter. His statues of Adam and Eve were removed from the Cathedral of Florence because they were thought to be too sensual. They are now in the Bargello.

10 [Note in Du Bos (inserted in footnote here due to length): These two statues are no longer in the Cathedral of Florence. They were moved by the order of Grand Duke Cosimo III and were put in the Great Hall of the old Palace. Their place has been taken by a work that Michelangelo left unfinished, which represents Christ being taken down from the cross.]

11 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letters* 9.9.14: "the paintings all over the gymnasia of the Areopagus and in the prytanea showing Speusippus with his head bowed forward, Aratus with his head bent back, Zenon with knitted brow, Epicurus with unwrinkled skin, Diogenes with long beard, Socrates with trailing hair, Aristotle with out-thrust arm; Xenocrates with gathered leg, Heraclitus with eyes closed through weeping, Democritus with lips wide open with laughter, Chrysippus with fingers bent to denote counting, Euclid with fingers extended because of the size of his measurements, Cleanthes with fingers gnawed for both reasons."

Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius, usually known as Saint Sidonius Apollinaris (ca. 430–486), Gallo-Roman nobleman, historian, poet, and bishop. Among his surviving works are nine volumes of letters.

12 Zeuxis (fl. 5th century BC), Greek painter. None of his paintings have survived but he was renowned for his realism.

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.10.5: "Parrhasius, on the other hand, was so definitive in every respect that they call him 'the lawgiver,' because the rest follow the representations of gods and heroes which he laid down, as though they had no other choice." The anecdote actually says that another Greek painter, Parrhasius (fl. 5th century BC), had the title Law Giver.

Thus, the observation of *vraisemblance* seems to me, after the choice of subject, the most important thing in the execution of a poem or picture. The rule that enjoins painters, like poets, to make a judicious plan, and to order their ideas so that their works may be interpreted without difficulty, comes immediately after the rule that enjoins observation of *vraisemblance*.

CHAPTER 31

The Disposition of the Plan. That the Arrangement of Pictures Must Be Divided into Poetic and Pictorial Composition.

My reflections on the plot of poems will be very brief, even though the topic is of great importance. What can be said regarding poems of great length can already be found in the *Treatise on Epic Poetry* by Father Bossu,[1] in the *Practice of the Theatre* by Abbé of Aubignac, and in the essays that the great Corneille wrote on his own works. What can be said about smaller works of poetry is very brief. If they describe an action, they need to have a starting-point, a plot, and a dénouement, just as theatrical works do. If they do not contain an action, they must have either an obvious or a hidden order. Their thoughts should be arranged in a manner that we can easily understand, and that we can also grasp the work's substance and rational progress.

With regard to painting, I believe that the arrangement, or the initial organization of objects that ought to fill a work, needs to be divided into pictorial and poetic composition.

I call pictorial composition the arrangement of objects that should be introduced into a painting in accordance with the general aim of the picture. A good pictorial composition is one where a first glance makes a good impression, in accordance with both the painter's intention and the purpose for which it was created. The painting must not be burdened by figures, although there should be enough to fill the canvas. The objects need to interact easily. The figures should not obscure one another by hiding half of the subject's head or other body parts, which the painter wants to reveal. Groups should be well composed, and their light should be judiciously distributed. Far from destroying one another, local colours[2] should be composed in a harmonious way that pleases the eye.

The poetic composition of a painting is an ingenious arrangement of figures invented to convey in a touching and *vraisemblable* way the action that

1 René Le Bossu (1631–1680), French writer and critic. Well-known for his *Traité du poème épique* [Treatise on the Epic Poem], written in 1675, Bossu argued that plot, rather than characters, ought to drive the play.

2 Local colour refers to the natural or true colour that objects have when unaffected by shadows, light, or reflections. Typically, local colours are assessed with matte, not glossy, finish.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_035

they represent. Poetic composition demands that all characters are connected through the main action. A picture may contain several episodes, on the condition that each individual action comes together in the main action, and that they all comprise the same, single subject. The rules of painting are as much an enemy of the duplication of action as those of drama. If painting can have episodes like poetry, then in paintings, as in tragedies, it is necessary that they be connected to the subject, and that the unity of action be preserved.

It is necessary that the characters are placed with judgement, decently dressed, in accordance with the dignity and importance that they have. Iphigenia's father, for example, should not be hidden behind other figures during the sacrifice of this princess. He should hold the most notable place after that of the victim. Nothing is worse than placing figures who are insignificant in the centre of a picture. A soldier should not be as richly dressed as his general, unless circumstance demands it. As we have already said in speaking about *vraisemblance*, all characters must gesticulate in ways that suit them, and everyone's expression should conform to the character they have been assigned. Above all, we should never encounter characters who are trivial and take no part in the picture's main action. They serve only to distract the viewer's attention. The artist should never attack decency or *vraisemblance* by favouring his design or his colours: this is how poetry gets sacrificed to artistic technique.

The talent required for poetic versus pictorial composition is so different that we see painters who excel at one and be disastrous at the other. Paulo Veronese,[3] for example, was very successful in that part of the arrangement we are calling picturesque composition. No painter has succeeded more than he did at arranging and placing a huge number of characters in the same scene, in a word, at successfully filling a giant canvas without throwing it into confusion. At the same time, Veronese was a failure at poetic composition. In the majority of his large paintings, there is not a single unified action. One of his most magnificent works, the *Wedding at Cana*, which can be seen at the back of the Refectory of the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, is filled with crimes against pictorial poetry. One small group of characters appears to be unaware of the miracle of the conversion of water into wine, which is its main subject. No one is moved as they should be. Among the guests, Veronese introduced some Benedictine monks from the convent for which he worked.[4] These char-

3 Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), important Mannerist Italian painter. His 1563 *The Wedding at Cana* depicts in Mannerist style the biblical account of the wedding banquet during which Jesus converts water into wine (John 2:1–11). The canvas is immense at nearly 70 m^2 and is currently located at the Louvre in Paris.

4 This work was commissioned by the Benedictine Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore to deco-

acters are dressed capriciously, and, as with his other paintings, he contradicts what we certainly know about the manners and customs of people on whom he based these actors.

Piles,[5] a great lover of painting who himself picked up the paintbrush, left us many writings on the topic of this art that ought to be known by everyone. One of his writings, *The Painters' Scale*, deserves all the praise owed to original books. From it, we learn how much merit each of the painters he evaluates achieves in each of the four categories into which he divided the art of painting. These categories are: composition, design, expression, and colour [*Course on Painting*, p. 489]. Supposing that twenty degrees on the scale marks the highest possible point of perfection attainable in each of these categories, Piles tells us the degree each painter attains. But by not dividing the art of painting into five categories, by not dividing what we are calling in general terms 'arrangement,' whether in pictorial or in poetic composition, Piles makes some unsupportable claims. For example, in quality of composition he places Paolo Veronese and Poussin at the same point on the scale. Meanwhile, the Italians agree that Veronese, who in his lifetime was named 'the people's painter,' the most flattering honour an artist can receive, is in no way comparable to Poussin in the art of painting.

Paolo Veronese is also placed at the same point on the scale as Le Brun, even though in the category of poetic composition, the only one considered here, Le Brun could have been placed as high as Raphael. In the great apartment of the King in Versailles, we find two excellent paintings placed side-by-side: Veronese's *The Pilgrims of Emmaüs*[6] and Le Brun's *The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander*.[7] A bit of attention paid to these paintings reveals that, if

---

rate the dining hall, which had been designed by Andrea Palladio in exchange for 324 ducats, some maintenance and sustenance costs, as well as a barrel of wine.

5 Roger de Piles (1635–1709), French painter and art critic. Known for having introduced the term 'chiaroscuro' into aesthetic theory, Piles wrote on the topics of proportion and perspective in art. De Piles evaluates fifty-six painters along four dimensions: composition, drawing, colour, and expression. Each of the painters is assigned a numerical score. Cours de peinture par principes (Paris: 1708).

6 *Les Pèllerins d'Emmaüs* (1559) is an early painting by Veronese. It depicts the biblical story of a dinner at the home of a pilgrim in the village of Emmaüs (Luke 24: 13–35) after Jesus had risen from the dead. Unrecognized, he walked with the pilgrims to their house and only after he had taken bread and given thanks did they realize who he was. This painting is noted for its capacity to indicate the sacred in the mundane by depicting the divinity at a peasant's table.

7 *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre* (1660), also called *The Tent of Darius*, is a painting by Charles Le Brun. The painting depicts Darius' mother prostrating herself at the feet of Alexander, the Macedonian king, after he vanquished her son at the battle of Issus. She is begging for clemency for her family, now imprisoned.

Veronese comes close to Le Brun in terms of colour, the Frenchman approaches the Italian in terms of pictorial poetry and expression. It is not difficult to figure out to whom Raphael would have given the prize: it seems that Raphael would have decided in favour of the category at which he excelled, that is, in favour of expression and poetry. I recommend that my reader consult the wise judgement made about these two paintings in the first volume of Perrault's *Parallels* [p. 225].[8] Notwithstanding all he wrote about antiquity, this gentleman, whose memory is venerated by those who knew him, was also capable of making a solid comparison between Veronese and Le Brun, following Wotton's lead, and of drawing a good parallel between the ancient and modern poets.

8 Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688–1692) [Parallel between Ancients and Moderns].

CHAPTER 32

Of the Significance of the Offences Painters and Poets Can Commit against Their Rules.

Since the parts of a picture are always adjacent to each other, and the whole is visible in a single glance, faults in its arrangement seriously undermine the effects of its beauties. We can see without difficulty a painting's relational defects when we simultaneously perceive objects that do not stand in the proper relations. If this defect consists, as with Bandinelli's, in a figure of a woman taller than that of a man of equal rank, it is easily noticed, since these two figures are side by side. It is not the same with a poem of some length. We only see a drama or an epic serially, and it takes several days to read the latter. Consequently, defects in the arrangement or organization of these poems do not jump out at us in the way that similar defects in a picture do. In order to notice the relational defects of a poem, it is necessary to recall what we have already seen or heard and, so to speak, retrace its footsteps, in order to compare objects that are inconsistent or misproportioned. For example, we must remember that an incident that occurs in the dénouement of the fifth act had not been sufficiently anticipated in the previous acts. Or that something said by a character in the fourth act contradicts the personality that he had been given in the first act. Not everyone always notices this, and some never do. They do not read poems to discover whether anything is a-kilter, but to enjoy the pleasure of being touched. They read poems as they view pictures and they are shocked only by defects which, so to speak, come under the heading of sentiment, and which diminish their pleasure.

As well, the real defects of a picture, such as a figure that is too short, a crippled arm, or a person wearing a grimace rather than a normal expression, are always adjacent to its beauties. We do not see what the painter has done well apart from what he has done poorly. Thus the bad prevents the good from making on us the impression that it should. Poetry is different: its real defects, such as a scene that abandons *vraisemblance*, or sentiments that are unsuited to the situation in which a character is placed, only make us dislike the part of a good poem where it is found. Even on adjacent beauties, these defects cast only a little shade.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_036

CHAPTER 33

Of Poetic Style, in Which Words Are Regarded as Signs of Our Ideas. That Poetic Style Determines the Fate of Poems.

The beauty of each part of a poem, that is, the manner in which each scene is treated and the manner in which characters are developed, contributes more to the success of a work than the correctness of its plan and its regularity, that is, the unity and interdependence of the poem's various parts. A tragedy whose scenes taken individually are beautiful, but are badly sewn together, is more successful than a tragedy whose scenes fit together, but which are individually cold. This is why we admire many poems that are far from consistent, but are rescued by inventiveness and a style full of artistry. These poems present, time after time, images that grab and move us. The palpable pleasure that fresh beauties cause at each moment prevents us from seeing some of the real defects of the piece, and makes us excuse others. In this way, an amiable man makes us forget his defects, and sometimes his vices, while we are seduced by his conversation. He even succeeds in making us forget the general turn of his character.

Poetic style consists in giving engaging sentiments to everyone who speaks, as well as in expressing by symbols and representing with images capable of moving us, things that would not touch us if they were simply stated in a prosaic style.

The first ideas born in the soul, when it receives a lively stimulus, which we call *sentiments*, always touch us, especially when they are expressed in the simplest terms. Sentiments speak the language of the heart. Thus, Emile interests us when she says, in the simplest terms,

J'aime encore plus Cinna que je hais Auguste.[1]

A sentiment would cease to be as touching if it were expressed in magnificent terms, and with highhanded symbols. Old Horace would not engage me as much as he does if, rather than simply (and famously) saying, '*Qu'il mourût*,'[2] he expressed this sentiment in a flowery style. The *vraisemblance* would

1 Corneille, *Cinna* (1641), Act 1, Scene 1, 18: "I love Cinna more than I hate Augustus."

2 Words spoken by the character Old Horace in Corneille, *Horace*, Act 3, Scene 6, 1021: "Let him die."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_037

perish with the simplicity of expression. Where I see affectations, I recognize most vividly the language of the heart.

Et Tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri,[3]

said Horace. But the remarks that speakers make concerning their sentiments and those of others, the reflections of the poet, the recitals, the descriptions, in short, everything that is not sentiment, should (as much the nature of the poem and *vraisemblance* permit) be represented by means of images that form pictures in our imaginations.

I except from this general rule the narration of tremendous events that have recently happened. It is probable that someone who has seen such events, and who would be the appropriate person to narrate them, has been struck with a lasting astonishment. It would not be *vraisemblable* if he failed to use turns of phrase in his narrative that a possessed man would naturally use. The poet is required to bring the audience to believe in these extraordinary events. One means of doing this is to narrate the events in the simplest terms and in terms least likely to raise the suspicion that he is exaggerating. But, as I have said, apart from these two exceptions, poetic style must be full of symbols depicting the objects described in the verses. It must do this so well that we cannot hear the verses without our imaginations being continually filled with pictures one after the other, just as the verses follow one other.

Each genre of poem has something stylistically unique. Most of the images suitable for feeding (so to speak) tragic style are too serious for comedy. At least, the comic poet must make very sparing use of them. He must only use them the way Chremes[4] spoke, when this character was briefly thrown into a tragic passion. We have already said that eclogues borrow their pictures and images from objects related to the countryside, and their events from rustic life. The poetic style of satire must be fed images that are actually capable of exciting our anger. The ode soars to the heavens in order to borrow its images and similes from thunder, the stars, and even the gods. But there are things that experience has already taught everyone who loves poetry.

Thus, it is necessary that we believe we see, so to speak, in listening to verse *ut pictura poesis*, as Horace said.[5] Cleopatra would attract less attention if the poet had her speak in a prosaic style to the odious ministers of her brother: "Be

3 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 95: "Tragedy often grieves in the language of prose."

4 Chremes is a character from Terence's comedy *Andria* (166 BC).

5 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 1.361: "As is painting, so is poetry."

afraid, villains. Righteous Caesar comes in force. He arrives with his troops." Her ideas sparkle and appear more elevated, when they are dressed in poetic symbols, and when she puts in Caesar's hands Jupiter's instrument of vengeance. This verse:

> *Tremblez, méchans, tremblez: voici venire la foudre*;
> [*Death of Pompey*][6]

shows Caesar armed with thunder, and Pompey's murderers blasted down. Simply said, there is little value in making a man who falls in love easily love someone. But it is a big thing to make a man, who has never displayed a tendency to love, love someone. This is a commonplace and would not attract much attention. When Racine puts this truth in the mouth of Aricie, dressed in the beauties of poetical style, it charms us [*Phèdre*, Act 1]. We are seduced by the images used by the poet to express this truth. The thought that may seem trivial becomes, in Racine's verses, an eloquent statement that strikes us, and that we remember.

> *Pour moi, je suis plus fière, et fuis la gloire aisée*
> *D'arracher un hommage à mille autres offert,*
> *Et d'entrer dans un coeur de toutes parts ouvert.*
> *Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible,*
> *De porter la douleur dans une âme insensible,*
> *D'enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné,*
> *Contre un joug qui lui plaît vainement mutiné:*
> *Voilà qui me plait, voilà ce qui m'irrite*.[7]

These verses imprint five pictures on the imagination.

I would not be touched much by a man who simply says, "I will die in the house where I was born." To die is the fate of all people; to expire in the bosom

---

6 Corneille, *Death of Pompey* (1642), 2.2.569: "Tremble, villains, tremble: here comes the thunder."

7 *Phèdre*, 2.1.446–453. The final line actually reads, *C'est là ce que je veux, c'est là ce qui m'irrite*.
> But I these easy conquests can despise,
> To force a tribute from a vulgar breast,
> Or storm a heart that's open on all sides.
> But to subdue a sense of paint to cruel souls,
> To lead a captive at his chains surprised,
> Rebelling vainly against a pleasing yoke,
> This is my chief ambition and delight.

of his family is the fate of the very happiest. However, the Abbé de Chaulieu gives us this idea by means of images highly capable of touching us:

Fontenay, lieux déliciex
Où je vis d'abord la lumiere,
Bientôt au bout de ma carrier
Chez toi je joinder mes Ayeux.

Muses, qui dans ce lieu champêtre
Avec soin me fites nourrir;
Beaux arbres, qu m'avez vu naître,
Bientôt vous me verrez mourir.[8]

These apostrophes[9] make me see the poet in conversation with the gods and trees of this place. I imagine that they are softened by the news that he gives them. The sentiment that he gives them gives birth in my heart to a sentiment like theirs.

The art of moving people and leading them as one wishes principally consists in knowing how to make good use of images. The most austere writer states very seriously that he will use only bare reason to persuade us. This writer soon senses that in order to convince us, he must move us and, in order to move us, he must put before our eyes depictions of the objects of which he speaks. The greatest advocate of uncompromising rationality that we have had, Fr. Malebranche, has argued against infectiousness of strong imaginations. The charm of these imaginations consists in their capacity to produce images and the ability to vividly depict objects [*The Search after Truth*, Book 2, Part 3].[10] But do not expect to find in his book a dry precision that rules out all symbols capable of moving and seducing us. He does not confine himself to conclusive arguments.

---

8 Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu (1639–1720), French poet and clergyman.
Fontenay, delicious place
Where I first saw the light,
Soon, at the end of my career,
The place where I will join my ancestors.

Muses, who in this rural place
Nourished me with care;
Beautiful trees, who have seen me born,
Soon you will see me die.

9 An apostrophe is a speech addressed to someone dead or not present.

10 Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), French rationalist philosopher.

This book is full of images and depictions. He appeals to our imaginations in arguing against the dangers of the imagination.

The biggest difference between verse and prose is poetic style. Many metaphors that would seem too bold in the most elevated style of oratory are acceptable in poetry. Images and symbols must be even more frequent in most genres of poetry than in oratory. Rhetoric, which is intended to persuade our reason, must always preserve an air of moderation and sincerity. Poetry is not like this. More than anything else it dreams of moving us and it will admit that it is often dishonest. Thus, it is poetic style, more than rhyme and metre, that makes a poet. According to Horace, one can be a poet in a prose work, and one is often only a prosateur in a work written in verse. Quintilian gives a good explanation of the use of images and symbols in the final chapters of Book 8 and the first chapters of Book 9 of *The Institutes of Oratory*. He leaves us nothing to do except to admire his insight and good sense.

The most important part of poetry [poetic style] is at the same time the most difficult. A poet needs divine inspiration, not rhymes, to invent images that clearly depict what he wants to say and to find the right expressions to give it existence. A mediocre poet can, by means of consultation and work, make a rule-governed plan and give decent manners to his characters. But only a man endowed with artistic genius can keep his work interesting, with new creations and with new images born at every turn. A person without genius soon falls into a dullness that gives birth to misleading symbols that do not clearly depict their object. Or he falls into ridiculousness that gives birth to symbols inappropriate to their subject. Consider, for example, the symbols used by the Carmelite author of the poem about Mary Magdalene.[11] It often consists of bizarre images when the poet should offer us serious images. The advice of a friend can often make us suppress unsuitable or poorly imagined symbols. But it cannot inspire the genius necessary to invent symbols that should be used. The assistance of others, as we will say in speaking of genius, cannot make a poet. At best, it can help someone improve.

A little reflection on the fate of French poems published in the past eighty years will persuade us that the value of a poem is due to the appropriateness and continuity of images and depictions that it provides. Poetic style has always determined the success or failure of poems, even those lengthy poems whose success seems to depend more on internal consistency, the arrangement of events, and the decency of manners.

11 Du Bos may refer to the poem, *Jesus at Bethany*, by St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), Carmelite nun, influential mystic, and theologian. *Jesus at Bethany* takes the form of a dialogue between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

The action and most of the characters are very defective in two of the great Corneille's tragedies: *El Cid* and *The Death of Pompey*.[12] One could even dispute the latter's claim to being a tragedy. However, the public is enchanted by the poetic style of these works and does not cease to admire them. The public ranks them above several other plays with better mores and a more systematic plan. No critical assessments can persuade the public that it is wrong in taking two tragedies to be excellent when, for eighty years, they have always made audiences cry. But, as the author of the English tragedy *Cato* has said,

> our English Poets have succeeded much better in the Style, than in the Sentiments of their Tragedies. Their Language is very often Noble and Sonorous, but the Sense either very trifling or very common. On the contrary, in the Ancient Tragedies, and indeed in those of Corneille and Racine tho' the Expressions are very great, it is the Thought that bears them up and swells them. For my own part, I prefer a noble Sentiment that is depressed with homely Language, infinitely before a vulgar one that is blown up with all the Sound and Energy of Expression.
>
> [*The Spectator*, 14 April 1711][13]

The structure and mores of two epic poems, *La Pucelle* of Chapelain and the *Clovis* of Desmarets,[14] are certainly better than those of the two tragedies I have mentioned. Their incidents, the most glorious parts of our history, must engage the French more than events that occurred a long time ago in Spain and Egypt. Everyone knows that the [lack of] success of these epic poems can only be attributed to defective poetic style. We can find in them scarcely a single natural sentiment capable of engaging us. They share this fault. As for the imagery, Desmarets only draws fantasies. Chapelain, in his barbaric style, sketches nothing that is not imperfect and twisted. All his depictions are drawn from Gothic

12 *Le Cid* (1636) and *La Morte de Pompée* (1643).

13 The publication date that Du Bos gives is incorrect. Addison's most famous play, *Cato* (1712, first staged in 1713) is set during the Roman civil wars and concerns the life and death of Caesar's most determined foe. Addison is also the author of *On the Pleasures of the Imagination*, a series of eleven articles published in *The Spectator*, an important literary journal, between 21 June and 3 July 1712 (nos. 411–421). *On the Pleasures of the Imagination* is often regarded as a foundational text of aesthetics in the English-speaking world.

14 Jean Desmarets, Sieur de Saint-Sorlin (1595–1676), French poet and dramatist; founding member of the Académie française. His epic poem, *Clovis*, is among the first to deal with Christian themes, which in turn instigated the publication of several works in defense of the Moderns in the famous Quarrel.

pictures. From this comes the only defect of *The Maid of Orleans* but it is one which, following Boileau, even its admirers must accept: the defect *Qu'on ne la sçauroit lire*.[15]

15 Boileau, *Satire* 10.458: "That it is unreadable."

CHAPTER 34

Of the Motive for Reading the Poets; That We Do Seek Instruction as in Other Books.

People of the trade are the only ones who make a study of the reading of the poets. As soon as we leave school, we only read them, we have already observed, to be pleasantly occupied. We do not read them as we read historians and philosophers, that is, we do not read them to learn. We can acquire some knowledge by reading a poem, but this is scarcely the motive for opening the book.

Thus, we act differently in reading a poet than we do in reading another book. In reading an historian, for example, we regard the style as incidental. The truth and the accuracy of the facts that we learn are important. In reading a poem, we regard any knowledge that we can take from it as incidental. The style is important, because the pleasure of the reader depends on the poem's style. If the poetical style of the novel about Telemachus[1] had been dreary, few people would have read the work, even if it were full of useful knowledge. Thus, if reading a poem pleases us, we praise it.

One will notice that I only speak here of serious students. Those who read mainly for amusement and secondly for information (which is three-quarters of readers) prefer histories written in an interesting style to poorly written but accurate and learned ones. A lot of people choose books on philosophy, and sciences more serious than philosophy, on the same basis. Let us ask whether everyone should believe that the poem that pleases best must be the better one.

People who only read poems in order to be pleasantly entertained devote themselves to present pleasure. They give themselves over to the impressions made by the part of the poem before their eyes. When this part occupies them pleasantly, they do not bother to interrupt their pleasure to reflect on whether it contains violations of the rules. If they happen upon a crude and palpable defect, their pleasure is indeed interrupted. They can criticize the poet, but they will be reconciled to him once they are past the flawed part of the poem and they begin to enjoy themselves again. Current pleasure dominates people so much that it makes them forget past evils and hides from them evils to come.

1 *Les Aventures de Télémaque* [The Adventures of Telemachus] (1699–1717) is a didactic novel about Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. It is designed to be a source of moral instruction for a broad audience. The author is François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, usually known as François Fénelon (1651–1715), poet, archbishop, and theologian.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_038

It can easily make us forget shocking defects of a poem once they are no longer before our eyes. When these relative defects are teased out, as we retrace our steps and reflect on what we have seen, they barely diminish the pleasure of the reader and the spectator. This is true even when they read or view the work, after having been informed of the defect. Those who have read criticism of *El Cid*[2] do not have less pleasure in seeing this tragedy.

In fact, the event that a tragedian clumsily plans will be too easy to anticipate. Still, it will not cease to move us, if it is well presented. The event will engage us, although it will not really surprise us. Though the actions of Polyeuctus and Athalie[3] do not really surprise those who have seen these tragedies several times, they do not cease to move these people to tears. It seems that the mind forgets that it knows some events in a tragedy, even when it knows its story perfectly well, in order to increase enjoyment of the surprise that events cause. Something like what I have described must happen since, after having seen the tragedy of Mithridates twenty times,[4] we are nearly as struck by the unexpected return of this prince (at the end of Act 1) as we would be if we were really surprised by such an event. Thus, our memory appears to be suspended during the performance. It seems that we limit ourselves to knowing the events that have already occurred. We are forbidden to anticipate events. And, as we forget what we have seen in other performances, we can easily forget what the faux pas of a poet has made him prematurely reveal. Can the appeal of pleasure so easily stifle the voice of reason?

The charm of colour is powerful enough to make us love the pictures of Bassano,[5] despite their being full of enormous design flaws and lack of poetic and pictorial *vraisemblance*. The charm of colour makes us praise them although their defects are actually before our eyes at the time we laud them. Consequently, as we read a poem we cannot easily imagine how the charms of poetic style make us forget the defects that we perceive there.

It follows from what I have said that the best poem is the one that engages us the most. It is the one that seduces us to the point of hiding most of its defects,

2 After the publication of *El Cid*, a pamphlet war, known as the *Querelle du Cid*, ensued. The *Querelle* was concerned with the question of whether Corneille had broken the rules of tragedy and whether he had provided moral instruction.

3 Du Bos refers to Corneille's *Polyeuctus martyr* (1643) and Racine's *Athalie* (1691).

4 Racine's *Mithridate* [Mithridates] (1673). At the outset of the play we hear of Mithridates' death but he is soon revealed to be alive.

5 Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1510–1592), Italian painter of religious themes, landscapes, and genre pictures. He was an advocate of mannerism, a school of painting that abandoned Renaissance ideals of balance and naturalism in favour of the exaggeration of proportions, tension, and asymmetry.

and even of making us voluntarily forget faults we have seen and which have shocked us. A poem engages us in proportion to the charms of its poetic style. This is why people always prefer poems that touch them to poems that obey the rules. This is why we prefer *El Cid* to so many other tragedies. If we want to return to first principles, we must judge a poem by its poetic style rather than by its conformity to rules or the decency of its mores.

Our neighbours, the Italians, have two epic poems in their language, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, that, like the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, have become books in the Library of Humanity. We praise Tasso's poem for the decency of its mores, its propriety, the economy of its plan, and, in short, its conformity to rules. I will say nothing of the mores, characters, decency, and organization of Ariosto's poem. Homer was a geometer compared to him. We know the pretty name that Cardinal Este gave to the formless grabbag of badly stitched together stories that is *Orlando furioso*.[6] The unity of action is so badly observed that later editions have been obliged to indicate, by marginal notes placed where the poet inserts a story, the place where it began, so that the reader can follow the thread of the story. This is a great service to the public since we do not read Ariosto twice straight through, going from the first Canto to the second, and then to the others in order. Instead of paying attention to the order of the books, we follow the different stories that Ariosto has collected rather than united. However, the Italians, generally speaking, rank Ariosto above Tasso. Having addressed the question following due process, the Accademia della Crusca[7] rendered the proper judgement that Ariosto is the best Italian epic poet. Tasso's most zealous advocate [Camillo Pellegrino, p. 11].[8] admits that he opposes the consensus opinion and that the public decided in favour of Ariosto, seduced by his poetic style. Ariosto's poem certainly surpasses in artistry *Jerusalem Delivered*, whose symbols are often not suited to the place where the poet has put them. Often these symbols are more brilliant and striking than correct. That is, they surprise and dazzle the imagination but they do not distinctly draw images that are able to engage us. This is what Boileau has called *the tinsel of Tasso*. Foreigners, with the exception of some of Tasso's compatriots, have agreed with this assessment. Addison, speaking of an Italian

6 Ippolito d'Este (1478–1520), Italian cardinal and patron of the arts, is reported to have asked Ariosto, "Where the devil, Ludovico, have you found this pile of bollocks?" D'Este's protégées included Ariosto.

7 Accademia della Crusca was founded in 1583 in Florence as a society for the study and preservation of the Italian language.

8 Camillo Pellegrino (1527–1603), Italian poet and scholar. Among his works is *Il Carrafa o vero della epica poesia* (Florence: 1584), in which he argues for the superiority of Tasso.

opera whose plot is taken from Tasso, writes that, "And as for the Poet himself from whom the Dreams of this Opera are taken, I must entirely agree with Monsieur *Boileau*, that one Verse in *Virgil* is worth all the *Clincant* or Tinsel of *Tasso*" [*Spectator*, 6 March 1711]. It is nevertheless true, to continue this metaphor, that we sometimes find the purest gold among the tinsel.

Attempting to alter the feelings of Italians on this point would be pointless. We can guess what they would say to a foreigner who criticized their poor taste. They would give the reply our fathers made when people wanted to diminish their love for *El Cid*. The arguments of others can well persuade us of the contrary of what we believe, but not of the contrary of what we feel. We feel which of the two poems gives us the most pleasure. I must speak more about this at the end of the second part of this work.

It seems to me that expression in a picture is like poetic style in a poem. I would gladly compare colour with the part of poetic art that consists in choosing and arranging words in a manner that results in verses with a harmonious sound. This part of the art of poetry may be called the mechanics of poetry.

CHAPTER 35

On Poetic Technique That Only Regards Words as Simple Sounds. Advantages of Poets Who Wrote in Latin over Those Who Wrote in French.

Poetic style consists in the choice and arrangement of words, considered as signs of ideas. Poetic technique consists in the choice and arrangement of words considered insofar as they are simple sounds, to which no signification is attached. Whereas poetic style regards words from the perspective of their signification, which makes them more or less good at giving rise to certain ideas in us, poetic technique regards them solely insofar as they are harmonious sounds. Being combined in different ways, they compose phrases that are either harsh or melodious when spoken aloud. The purpose of poetic style is to create images and to please the imagination. The point of poetic technique is to make harmonious verses and to please the ear. Their aims are frequently at odds, you will say to me, and I would agree: one must be born a poet to reconcile them.

Anything original that I have to say about poetic technique can be found in the comparison that I will make between Latin and our own language to show the advantage that Latin poets had over French poets in this part of the poetic art. It is good to prove once and for all that those who maintain that French poetry cannot equal Latin poetry are not wrong, whether with regard to poetic style or in the cadence and harmony of verses. After having seen that Latin, due to its brevity and inversion, is better at creating images than French, I will give several reasons why those who compose poetry in Latin have the means for making metrical, harmonious verses that the French lack.

Speaking geometrically, Latin is much more parsimonious than French. If some Latin words happen to be longer than their French synonyms, there are also French words that are longer than their Latin cognates. In comparison, French has nothing over Latin in this regard. But Latin speakers decline their words in such a way that, wherever it is used, declension, or word-ending, indicates case. When we find the word *'Dominus'* ['God'] in a Latin phrase, we recognize its case by whether it is genitive, dative, or accusative. Latin says *'Domini'* ['to God'] in the genitive, *'Dominum'* ['of God'] in the accusative. We also recognize whether it is plural or singular by the ending. If some cases have the same ending, the rules of the verb prevent us from misunderstanding. Latin speakers decline their nouns without the help of the following the articles, 'the' (*le*), 'of

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_039

the' (*du*), and so on, which are required for declining French nouns, because we do not change the case following the article. We have to say, 'the master,' 'of the master,' 'to the master.'

Latin conjugates verbs just as it declines nouns. *The case* marks tense, person, number, and mode. If some *case endings* are similar, the meaning of the phrase removes ambiguity. A child of twelve does not get stumped, and a fourteen-year-old never hesitates any longer. We do not conjugate the majority of verb tenses in French, unless we use the help of two other verbs, which for that reason are called 'auxiliary verbs,' namely the possessive verb 'to have' (*avoir*) and the substantive verb 'to be' (*être*). If Latin speakers were required to rely on one auxiliary verb to conjugate certain passive tenses, we are nearly always required to add two. To render '*Amatus fui*,' we have to say, 'I have been loved' [*J'ai été aimé*]. To conjugate French verbs, we need the help of the article: I, you, him/her, and their plurals. Moreover, we cannot suppress the preposition, as Latin writers are almost always able to do. Latin neatly says, '*Illum ense occidit*;' but to say everything that these three little words say, the French must say, 'He killed him with a sword' [*Il le tua avec un epée*]. Clearly, at its core French is wordier than Latin in just the same way that one circle, much larger than another, needs a bigger compass to measure it.

If someone alleges that Latin translations are much longer than their original French versions, I would reply that this excess of translation happens either because of the nature of the subject treated in the original or by the fault of the translator. But we would never draw this conclusion regarding Latin's brevity.

In the first place, a poor translator cannot find an appropriate word to signify the French word he wants to translate. Instead of looking it up in a dictionary, he tries to express the same sense using a paraphrase. This is how school children's exercises end up being much longer than the French dictated by their teacher. In the second place, sometimes the Latin translator of a French historian, wanting to provide the details of a siege, a naval combat, or parliamentary session, has all the right terms on hand but cannot find synonymous words in Latin. Since the Romans were not acquainted with things spoken about by the translator, they lacked the words to signify them correctly. They did not have the right words to describe a mortar,[1] or the prominent angle of a counterscarp,[2] because they did not have those things. The translator is thereby reduced to using a paraphrase, and can only render in several words what the French

1 A mortar is a weapon that fires projectiles at low velocities and high trajectories.

2 A counterscarp is part of the fortification of a ditch or trench. It is the "outer wall or slope of the ditch, which supports the covered way, sometimes extended to include the covered way" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

writer was able to do in one. But this prolixity is nothing other than prolixity by accident, as would be the prolixity of a French writer who translated a dinner party given by Lucullus,[3] or the description of a gladiatorial combat, which would have required speaking of many things that lack a name in our language. For this reason, Latin is always more parsimonious than French as long as we write on subjects for which both languages are equally terminologically advantaged. But nothing helps better to make powerful phrases than brevity. Words are like the metal used to make a diamond: the less they are used, the more the stone creates a beautiful effect. An image described in six words strikes us more vividly and makes a better effect than what is achieved in ten. All our best poets have strongly assured me that this truth could never be challenged by any sensible writer.

Not only is Latin in a better position than French with regard to poetic style, but it is infinitely better suited than French for successful poetic technique for four reasons. Latin words are, in every regard, more beautiful than French words. It is much easier to compose harmoniously in Latin than in French. The rules of Latin poetry are less bothersome than the rules of French poetry. Finally, following the rules of Latin poetry adds more beauties into verses than do the rules of French poetry. Let us quickly explain these four points.

In the first place, Latin words are more beautiful than French words in two respects. Words can be regarded as either signs of our ideas or simple sounds. As signs of our ideas, words are prone to two different beauties. The first is to arouse a delightful idea in us.[4] Words of every language are equal in this respect. In this way, the word '*perturbator*,'[5] which sounds so beautiful to the ear, is no more beautiful in Latin than '*brouillon*' is in French. Both give rise to the same idea. The second beauty words have as signs of our ideas is their particular connection to the idea they signify. They somehow imitate the inarticulate sound we would use for signifying it. Let me explain.[6]

---

3 Lucius Licinius Lucullus (118–56 BC), politician in the late Roman Republic. Having acquired enormous wealth by collecting booty on his many military conquests, Lucullus became well known for his lavish dinner parties, where he sometimes served food never before eaten in Rome, or food that he himself cultivated in his many parks and pleasure grounds.

4 Here and throughout this chapter, Du Bos is explaining the process of linguistic signification in Aristotelian terms. According to Aristotle, spoken and written words *give rise to* understandings, or ideas (*intellectus*). Signification is not the same as the contemporary sense of 'meaning.' Rather, signification is a psycho-causal process in which words and phrases induce a mental grasp of what is signified by a given sound. According to Aristotle (*On Interpretation* 16a), while both the things signified and the understandings that are generated are universal ('the same for all'), both written and spoken words are conventional.

5 Disturber.

6 Du Bos is responding to arguments advanced for the superiority of French over Latin by

To understand one another, people use artificial and natural sounds. Artificial sounds are articulated words which people who speak the same language agree to use to express certain things. This is why a word only has signification among a certain group of people. A French word has signification only among those who understand that language. When people fail to recognize it, it gives rise to no idea. When humans constructed a new language by forming artificial sounds, they had to do what people today do when they cannot find a word to express something: they follow natural instinct. To make themselves understood, either they mimic the noise the thing makes, or they add some sort of tone to the imperfect sound that resembles the thing, without being able to name it.[7] This is how a foreigner who, unaware of the word for thunder in French, exchanges the word for the imitation of the sound of that meteorological event. This is apparently the way ancient Gauls formed the name '*cocq*,'[8] which we use today with the same meaning as theirs to imitate by the sound of the word the intermittent sound of the call made by this bird. This is also how they formed the word '*bec*,'[9] which means the same for them as it does for us.

Imitative sounds were put into usage mainly when people had to give names to sighs, to laughter, to groans, and all of the inarticulate expressions of our sentiments and passions. It is not by mere guesswork that we know the Greeks used them in the same way. Quintilian tells us explicitly that they did so, and he praises them for their invention. *Fingere Graecis magis concessum est, qui sonis quibusdam et affectibus non dubitaverunt nomina aptare, non alia libertate quam qua illi primi homines rebus appellationes dederunt* [*Institut*. bk. 8, ch. 3].[10] But the sounds these words imitate are found to be signs instituted by nature itself in order to signify passions and other things of which they are signs. They draw their signification and their power from nature itself. In effect, they are mostly the same everywhere, similar to the cries of animals. At least, if the sounds by which people indicate their surprise, their joy, their pain, and their other passions are not exactly the same in every country, they are pretty similar to everyone who hears them: *Ut in tanta per omnes gentes nationesque*

François Charpentier, author of *Défense de la langue française pour l'inscription de l'Arc de Triomphe* [An Argument for Inscribing the Arc de Triomphe in the French Language] (1676). See the Introduction for more details.

7 Du Bos is referring to onomatopoeia, which is the formation of a word from a sound associated with the thing or action being named. For example, 'thud,' 'swoosh,' 'tick-tock.'

8 '*Cocq*' is the French word for cock or rooster, now spelled 'coq.'

9 '*Bec*' is the French word for beak.

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 8.3.30: "Coining words ... is more a privilege of the Greeks, who have not hesitated to fit words even to certain sounds and emotions with the same freedom with which primitive man gave things their names."

linguae diversitate, hic mihi omnium hominum communis sermo videatur [*Instit.* bk. 2, ch. 2].[11] It is, if we can use this expression here, a currency stamped on nature's coin that runs throughout all of humankind.

It follows that words that, when spoken, imitate the sound they signify, or the noise we naturally make for expressing the thing for which they are an instituted sign, or which have some other connection with the thing signified, are more powerful than words that are used that have no other connection to the signified thing. A word with a natural connection to the signified thing gives rise most vividly to the associated idea. The sign which draws part of its power and signification from nature itself is more powerful and acts more efficaciously on us than the sign that has its force by chance or the whim of the name-giver.

Languages we call 'mother tongues,' not because they are derived from another language but were formed from jargon passed around neighbouring primitive huts, should contain more of these imitative words than derived languages do. When derived languages are formed, chance, the condition of the organs of those composing them, which differ according to the air and temperature of each region, the way that the previous language being spoken merges with the composition of the new language and, finally, the ingenuity that presides at its first inception, are the causes that alter the pronunciation of most imitative words. They lose the power that would otherwise give them a natural connection between the sound and the thing for which they were instituted. This is why mother tongues have an advantage over derived languages. This is why, for example, Hebrew speakers are charmed by the meaning of the words of that language.

Even though Latin was itself a language derived from Greek and Tuscan, it is nevertheless a mother tongue with regard to French: the majority of French words come from Latin. And even though Latin words are less powerful than those languages from which they were derived, they are more powerful than French words. Besides, the genius of our language is very weak. Rarely does it dare to break the rules to achieve beauties of which it is sometimes capable, if it were less scrupulous.

Thus we notice that many words that are still imitative in Latin are no longer so in French. Our word '*hurlement*' does not express the cry of the wolf as well as '*ululatus*,' from which it is derived, when it is pronounced '*ouloulatous*,' as several nations do. The same is true for '*singultus*,' '*gemitus*,' and many others. French words are not as powerful as the Latin words from which they were bor-

11 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.2.87: "Amid all the linguistic diversity of the peoples and nations of the world, this, it seems to me, is the common language of the human race."

rowed. This is why I had reason to say that most Latin words are more beautiful than most French words, considering words as signs of our ideas.

Regarding words considered as simple sounds which signify nothing, doubtless some are not as pleasing as others; consequently, some words are not as beautiful as others. Words composed of sounds, which by themselves and in combination are more pleasing to the ear, should be more pleasing than others whose sounds are not so pleasantly combined. This is, as I said, independent of their signification. Would we deny that the word '*compagnon*' is no more pleasing to the ear than '*collégue*,' even though with regard to their meanings the word '*collègue*' is more beautiful than '*compagnon*?' Both simple soldiers and factory workers have companions, whereas magistrates have colleagues. As Quintilian says, this is because *Nam, ut syllabae e litteris melius sonantibus clariores sunt, ita verba e syllabis magis vocalia, et quo plus quodque spiritus habet, eo auditu pulchrius* [*Instit*. bk. 8, ch. 5].[12] There are more sonorous syllables in 'companion' than in 'colleague,' and one of our best poets and, for the purposes of what we are doing here, one of the best verse *constructors*, preferred the word 'companion' to 'colleague' in a phrase where 'colleague' would have been the appropriate choice [*Rousseau*].[13] He availed himself of Cicero's maxim that, on occasion, allows sacrificing the rule and part of the meaning of the charms of harmony. *Impetratum est*, he said, in speaking of some Latin words, *a consuetudine, ut suavitatis causa peccare liceret*.[14]

But, generally speaking, when pronounced, Latin words sound better than French words. The final syllables of words that create a better sensation than

---

12 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 8.3.16: "For just as syllables composed of the better-sounding letters have a clearer ring, so words composed of such syllables are more euphonious, and the fuller the sound of a given word, the more attractive it is to the ear."

13 Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1671–1741), French poet and playwright. Du Bos seems to refer to *Epistre à Mr. Le Comte D'Ayen*. There we find the following rhyme:

> *À quelque mal, avec son chant mignon,*
> *Fréres, jettons en l'eau le Compagnon.*
> [They said he could induce nymphs] To some evil with his pretty song,
> Let us throw the companion into the water.

The point is that one would probably be less willing to throw a companion (or comrade) into the water than a colleague, but Rousseau had to use '*compagnon*' since it preserved the rhyme scheme.

14 Cicero, *Orator* 157.19–20: "and so custom granted permission to err for the sake of agreeable effect." This example is also used in the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée contenant les fondemens de l'art de parler, expliqués d'une manière claire et naturelle* [Port Royal Grammar], written by Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) and Claude Lancelot (ca. 1615–1695), Jansenist intellectuals affiliated with the Port Royal school. It was a popular, if controversial, school text in France during this period.

others because of the ease by which they are regularly followed are, generally speaking, more sonorous and more varied in Latin than in French. A large number of French words end in the letter 'e,' which we call 'feminine.' Generally speaking, whether we consider them as signs of ideas or as simple sounds, French words are less beautiful than Latin words. This is my first reason for maintaining that the Latin language is more advantageous for poetry than French.

My second reason is taken from the syntax of these two languages. Latin construction permits inverting the natural order of words, transposing them so that an arrangement can be made where they can be pronounced easily, creating at the same time a pleasing melody. But following our construction, a noun's case in a phrase can be indicated only by means of the natural sequence of the construction and by the order that the word has in it. For example, we say 'the father' (*le père*) both in the accusative and nominative. If I put 'the father,' when it is in the accusative, before the verb, my sentence would turn out to be nonsense.[15] We are thereby bound, on pain of being unintelligible, to put the noun that should be recognized as the nominative of the verb first, then the verb, then the noun in the accusative. Thus, rules of construction, not principles of harmony, decide the arrangement of words in a French phrase. Inversions can certainly have a place in our language in certain cases, but this comes with two restrictions to which Latin writers are never subjected. First, French only permits the inversion of clauses of a phrase, not the inversion of words that compose the clauses. The order of words specified by a rule must be preserved, something never needed in Latin where each word can be transposed. Second, we demand that our poets make sober use of the inversions permitted them. The inversion and transposition permitted in French are just the ordinary arrangement of words in Latin.

In order to be harmonious, however, French phrases have a more urgent need than Latin phrases for inversion. About half the words in our language end with vowels and, of these vowels, the silent 'e' is the only one that is elided against the vowel that begins the following word. Accordingly, we easily pro-

15 Du Bos writes, "ma phrase devient un galimathias." 'Galimatias' is a word whose first French use is in Book 1 of *Essais* (1580), by Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French philosopher and statesman. The exact origin of this word is not known, although according to one explanation, it was coined when a young lawyer, defending (in Latin) a client named 'Matthias,' yelled "Gallus Matthaie!" (*"le coq de Matthias*," "the rooster of Matthias") upon hearing a rooster crow on the morning of the trial. It is also attested in a writer well-known to Du Bos, namely Molière in his *The Miser*, 5.5: "*Qui songe à votre argent dont vous me faites un galimatias*?" See Hugh Roberts, "Comparative nonsense: French *galimatias* and English *fustian*," *Renaissance Studies* 30.1 (2016), 102–119.

nounce '*fille aimable*' [friendly girl]; but other vowels that do not elide against the vowel starting the next word lead to a clash of disagreeable sounds when pronounced. These clashes break up continuity and disconcert harmony. The following expressions have this awful effect: *'L'amitié abandonnée,*' '*la fierté opulente,*' '*l'ennemi idolâtre*' [Friendship abandoned, generous pride, idolatrous enemy]. We easily hear the ugly pronunciation made by the collision of sound of these vowels butting up against one another. But today's rules of our poetry permit the combination of similar words.

Rules permit the liaison of words beginning and ending with these vowels where pronunciation cannot be made without a little break in sound. This difficulty is not found in Latin. In French, all vowels elide when a word ending in a vowel meets up against a word beginning with a vowel. A Latin poet can easily avoid this offensive collision with the help of inversion, whereas a French poet can almost never do so using this short-cut. The French poet finds no other recourse than to remove the word corrupting the phrase's harmony. Often he must sacrifice either harmony for the power of meaning, or the power of meaning for harmony. Nothing is more difficult when we write in French than preserving the rights of meaning and harmony, since we find their interests in opposition.

Latin inversion easily allows us to find variety and combination in sounds most pleasing to our ears. There cannot be genuine harmony in a phrase without a variety of sounds. Even the most beautiful sounds become annoying when they immediately and repeatedly follow one another. When we interrupt them with different sounds, they seem to create the art of the phrase. It also happens that some sounds hurt our ears when they strike them immediately after certain sounds that may have pleased the ear, had they been presented after different sounds. This is because positions of the organs used in pronunciation in order to articulate certain syllables do not allow those organs to reposition themselves again as easily as they should.[16] They need to reposition themselves back in order to articulate the following syllables with ease. People have long known that pronunciation that is painful for a speaker's mouth is painful to the hearer's ears. This is why we are automatically taken aback by a person who has

16 The late-17th and 18th centuries in England and France saw a major rise in in scientific and aesthetic interest in human ears. Most scientific explanations of auditory sensation were mechanistic, and they are characterized by interest in the functions of auditory nerves. See Penelope Gouk and Ingrid Sykes, "Hearing science in mid-eighteenth century Britain and France," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 66.4 (2011), 507–545, and Alistair Cameron Crombie, *Science, Optics, and Music in Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (London: 1990).

a hard time pronouncing certain foreign words. Such a person is required to manipulate his speech organs to produce sounds he does not ordinarily form. The demands of civility have trouble repressing our first instinct to laugh and ridicule people in foreign countries.

For the reasons put forward, it is clear that it is much easier for Latin writers to create pleasing alliances between sounds, to place all the words of a phrase after other words that are enjoyable due to their placement, in a word, to arrive at what Quintilian calls *inoffensam verborum copulam*,[17] which is not possible for French writers to achieve. The French phrase "*Le père aime son fils*" [The father loves his son] can only be written in the order in which I just wrote it. It must follow that very arrangement of words. But when those words composing the phrase are put into Latin, they can be arranged in four different ways.

In the third place, rules of Latin poetry are easier to practice than rules of French poetry. Rules of Latin poetry prescribe a particular metre to each type of verse. This metre is composed of a number of determinate feet.[18] The value of each foot is also regulated. It dictates the number of syllables being composed, and designates their length or brevity. When the rule permits a choice to use an alternative, that is to say, the liberty to use one foot in place of another in the figure, it at the same time prescribes what must be done upon making that choice.

These rules are effectively nothing other than the observations and practice of the best Latin poets reduced to artistic method. People began to create poems before there were rules to do so. They first worked by consulting nothing other than the rules of their own ears. Their reflections on verses whose metre and verse pleased them, and on those whose cadence was unappealing, produced the laws of versification. *Sicut poema nemo dubitaverit imperito quodam initio fusum, et aurium mensura et similiter decurrentium spatiorum observa-*

17 Du Bos' paraphrase is not, strictly speaking, accurate. From Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.23: "*nisi forte in carminibus tantum et in canticis exigitur structura quaedam et inoffensa copulatio vocum, in agendo supervacua est, aut non compositio et sonus in oratione quoque varie pro rerum modo adhibetur sicut in musice*" ("Or do you imagine that some kind of structure and euphonious combination of sounds is necessary only for poetry or the sung parts of plays, and not essential in pleading? Or that oratory does not employ various kinds of composition and sounds according to the needs of the subject just as music does?").

18 A foot is the basic unit of measurement in poetic metre. It concerns the relationship between stressed and unstressed syllables. A stressed syllable is one that is accented when pronounced (e.g., in 'bacon,' the first syllable is stressed, the second unstressed; in 'constitution,' the 'u' is stressed whereas the others are not). The study of metric feet is called 'prosody.'

tione esse generatum, mox in eo repertos pedes … Ante enim carmen ortum est quam observatio carminis [Quint. *Instit.* Bk. 9].[19] Like other arts, poetry is nothing but a systematic collection of principles settled by general consent as a result of observations of the effects of nature. *Neque enim ipse versus ratione est cognitus, sed Natura atque sensu quem dimensa ratio docuit quid acciderit. Ita notatio Naturae et animadversio peperit artem* [Cicero *Orator*].[20] All people have held the same objective in their poetry, although not all got there by equally good routes.

True, the rules of Latin poetry are more numerous than those of French poetry. This is because they get into greater detail about versification than do the rules of French poetry. But since these rules determine, so to speak, how to make poetic figure by using different characters indicating the quantity of syllables, they are easier to understand and remember.

"A bit of figure makes everything understood," says the Italian proverb.[21] Do we not see children learn Latin rules of poetry by heart and put them into practice starting at age fifteen, even though Latin is for them a foreign language that is only learned by rote? When Latin was a living language, whoever wanted to create Latin verse already knew the quantity, that is to say, the length or brevity of syllables, by using the language. Even today we should not underestimate the difficulty of learning quantity in Latin poetry. We need to know it to be able to speak Latin well, just as we need to know the quantity of syllables of our own natural language to speak it well.

As soon as one learns the rules of Latin poetry, nothing is easier than arranging the words following a given metre where we can transpose the words to our liking.

Construction of our French verses is subject to four rules. Our verses must be composed of a certain number of syllables, according to the type of poem. Second, our verses of four, five and six feet ought to have a rest or a line break. Third,

19 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.114–115: "So with poetry: everyone agrees that it came originally from unskilled outpourings, and was generated by the ear's sense of measure and the observation of regularly recurring intervals, the feet contained in it being a later discovery … Poetry arose before its rules were known."

20 Cicero, *Orator* 55.183: "Verse itself, as a matter of fact, is not recognized by abstract reason, but by our natural feeling; later on, theory measured the verse and showed us what happened. The art of poetry, therefore, arose from observation and investigation of a phenomenon of nature."

21 This proverb is from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno* 18.10: "*Quale dove per guardia delle mura, Più e più fossi cingnon li castelli, La parte dov'ei son rende figura*," from which the expression "*e rende una figura*" was derived. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Italian poet, wrote the *Divine Comedy*, considered to be a great masterpiece.

it is necessary to avoid competition between the final and initial vowels so that they do not suffer from elision. Finally, it must rhyme. But by slavish conformity to the natural order of words, rhyme becomes the chain that irritates sensitive poets, compared to all the rules of Latin poetry. Indeed, we do not see in the most mediocre poets trivial epithets inserted into the work merely to finish the verse. But among our better poets, how many epithets do we see introduced only to meet the rhyming requirements? To prove my point, I draw attention to the difficulty of rhyming in the epistle Boileau addressed to King Louis XIV on the passage of the Rhine,[22] as well as the epistle he wrote to Molière.[23] I would say that if rhyme is like a slave who must obey, it is costly to get this slave to do his work.

Our poets are charged with observing line breaks, numbers of syllables, and avoiding the clash of syllables while composing. Obviously, we see French poets who compose Latin poetry much more easily than French poetry. The less the poet's imagination is hampered by mechanical details, the more his imagination takes over. The less it is constrained, the more it gives the poet freedom of invention. An artist who can guide his instruments easily gives his work an elegance and sparkle, compared to what the artist who does not have such pliable instruments in his hands can give into his. Thus, Latin writers, particularly Latin poets less constrained than our own, tried to draw charms and beauties from their language that are nearly impossible to draw from French. For example, Latin writers were able to create phrases that we can call 'imitative phrases.' Just as there are imitative words, so too there are imitative phrases.

Someone who lacks words to express some extraordinary sound, or to render the feeling that touches him by groaning, naturally has recourse to the expedient of mimicking that same sound, and indicating his sentiments by inarticulate sounds. We are naturally moved to depict by inarticulate sounds the crash made by a house being torn down, or the confused sound of a tumultuous crowd, or the appearance and speech of a person transported by anger, and many other things. Instinct allows us to supplement the sterility of language and the sluggishness of imagination by means of these inarticulate sounds. Parents know the need to correct a child's tendency to use inarticulate sounds, whose usage we regard as a bad habit. Savages and base people, people whose natures have not been corrected, often use inarticulate sounds all their lives.

I will call 'imitative phrases' those which, when pronounced, make a noise that somehow imitates the inarticulate noise we make by natural instinct, in

22 Boileau, *Epitre IV, Au Roi* [Letter 4 to the King] (1672).

23 Boileau, *Epitre VII, à Racine* [Letter 7 to Racine] (1677). Boileau appears not to have written an epistle to Molière, although Molière is mentioned in this epistle dedicated to Racine.

order to give the idea of a thing that a sentence expresses with articulate words. Latin writing is filled with these imitative phrases, which were admired and praised by writers in the past. They were borrowed by Romans in the time of Augustus, who were competent judges of their artistry. For example, Virgil's verse depicting Polyphemus:

> *Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens; cui lumen*
> *adtemptum*.[24]

By suppressing the vowels that make an elision, and in sounding out the '*u*' as Romans pronounce it, this verse itself becomes monstrous. There is also the verse where Persius speaks of a man who snuffles, which one could not also pronounce without snuffling:

> *Rancidulum quiddam balba de nare locutus*.[25]

It seems that changes that came about in Latin pronunciation have disguised part of these beauties, but have not hidden them all from us.

Our poets who wanted to enrich their poems with imitative phrases did not succeed in satisfying French taste in the way Latin poets succeeded in satisfying Roman taste. We laugh at Bartas' verses where, in describing a horse, he says: *le champ plat bat, abbat*.[26] We do not treat Ronsard's verses seriously when he describes Alouette's flight in imitative phrases:

> *Elle guindée du Zéphire,*
> *Sublime en l'air vire et revire*
> *Et y déclique un jolli cris,*
> *Qui rit, guérit et tire l'ire*
> *Des esprits, mieux que je n'écris*.[27]

---

24 Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.658–660: "a monster awful, hideous, huge, and eyeless." Polyphemus was the Cyclops blinded by Odysseus.

25 Persius, *Satires* 1.34: "snorting and lisping some nauseating stuff." Aulus Persius Flaccus (34–62 BC), Roman poet and satirist.

26 Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas (1544–1590), French poet and courtier. "Le Sixième Jour" in *La Sepmaine ou Création du Monde*, (Paris: 1578): "He makes the trampled ground shrink under him." This phrase was widely quoted in French dictionaries throughout the 18th century; for example, see Jean-François Féraud, *Dictionnaire Critique de la Langue Française*, vol. 1 "A–D" (Marseille: 1787), 758.

27 Du Bos refers to Ronsard, but the passage is in fact from Jacques Peletier du Mans' *Elogue à l'Alouette*:

Pasquier recounts many other imitative phrases from French poets in the chapter in his research where he wants to prove "that our French language is no less capable than Latin of beautiful poetic traits" [Bk. 8. ch. 10];[28] but the examples Pasquier introduces refute his thesis.

Indeed, because one might introduce some imitative phrases into a poem, it does not follow that its verses will be any good. These imitative phrases need to be introduced without prejudicing meaning or grammatical construction. But I only recall a single piece of French poetry that meets these criteria. It is one that somehow contrasts with so many verses that Latin writers of all periods have borrowed from poets who wrote in the vernacular. It is the description of an assault found in the *Ode* of Boileau about the capture of Namur. The poet depicts, using imitative phrases and elegant verses, a soldier clamouring up a breach, and who wants,

> *Sur les monceaux de piques,*
> *De corps morts, de rocs, de briques,*
> *S'ouvrir un large chemin*.[29]

I apologize to our poets who can compose in this style as successfully as Boileau for not citing them; it is just that I do not know their poems.

Not only is French not as apt to these beauties as Latin is, but it turns out that we have not studied the value of sounds, the combination of syllables, the arrangement of appropriate words to produce certain effects, nor the rhythm that can result from the composition of phrases as well as the Romans did.

> She, supported on the zephyr,
> Sublime, in the air, turns and comes back
> And issues a pretty call
> That laughs, heals, and draws
> Anger from souls, better than I can say in words.

Peletier (1517–1582) was an autodidact who wrote on art and mathematics. He was a close friend of Ronsard's, and both were members of the Pléiade. See Fernand Letessier, "Un Humaniste Manceau: Jacques Peletier (1517–1582)," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé: Lettres d'humanité* 9.9 (1950), 206–263.

28 Étienne Pasquier (1529–1615), French lawyer and writer. The reference is to Pasquier's *Recherches de la France* (1565), which is an effort to provide a history of France celebrating its superiority over the Latin language and the system of Roman law, as well as others, Book 8.10: "*que notre langue Françoise n'est pas moins capable, que la Latine, de beaux traits poëtiques*."

29 Boileau, *Ode Sur La Prise de Namur* [Ode on the Capture of Namur], in *Oeuvres de Boileau* [Boileau's Works], vol. 2 (Paris: 1892), 268–269: "On the heaps of stone, of dead bodies, rocks and bricks, a wide road opens."

Those of our writers wanting to try to do something approaching what the Romans did would not find help in any systematic research already made on this topic. Their only resource would be to consult their ears; but the best ears are not always enough, especially when, so to speak, they are not yet refined. For guaranteed success in these efforts, one needs to have established rules that can be consulted in the heat of composition; or, at least beforehand one must have made several reflections on the grounds for which certain maxims were founded. Emboldened by its fertility, the ancients cultivated their terrain with care. Those curious to know how the ancients fared on this issue in greater detail, and just how far they extended their views, should read Quintilian's 9.4, *The Orator* by Cicero, and whatever Longinus wrote on the choice of words, rhythm, and metre in his *Treatise on the Sublime*, and in his introduction to Hephaestion's *Enchiridium*.[30]

My fourth proof that poetic technique better equips Latin than French is this: beauties resulting from simply observing the rules of Latin poetry are greater than those resulting from French poetic rules.

Observing Latin rules of poetry necessarily introduces rhythm into verses composed following the rules for that type of poetry. In Latin poems, the sequence of diversely intermixed short and long syllables, following the proportion prescribed by the art, always leads to a cadence such that the type demands. The rules of Latin poetry are nothing other than observations and practices of the best Latin poets on the arrangement of syllables needed for producing rhythm, summarized in precepts and then in method. True, these rules do not prescribe what the sound of each syllable should be. They merely determine the arithmetic number of syllables that should enter each type of verse, and indicate which of these syllables should be long, which should be short, and where the long and short syllables can be placed. For example, they clearly state that the two last syllables of hexametre should be long; but they do not state which sound those two last syllables should be. Thus the rules of Latin poetry do not introduce harmony into Latin poetry, which is nothing other than an agreeable combination of different sounds. It is up to the poet's ears to discover what sounds are best for producing a pleasing and suitable harmony to the meaning of the verses. Propertius[31] did not have an ear as

30 Hephaestion (fl. 2nd century AD), Alexandrian grammarian. Du Bos refers to the *Enchiridion de Metris*, which was first translated into a modern language in 1843 by Thomas Foster Barham: *The Enkheiridion of Hehfaistiown concerning Metres and Poems; Translated into English and illustrated by notes and a rhythmical notation*.

31 Sextus Propertius (ca. 50–15 BC), Latin elegiac poet who wrote four books called *Elegies*.

delicate as Tibullus' for judging the combination of sounds. Consequently, his poems are less harmonius than Tibullus', in which we find a *singular smoothness* when they are recited. The difference between the cadence of their elegiac poems was due to Propertius' affectation to imitate the cadence of Greek pentametre. One should not confuse this with the difference in harmony between the two poets. But putting this aside, their poems have, so to speak, the same gait, even though those by Propertius do not stride with the same grace as those by Tibullus. In great praise of the rules of Latin poetry, they accomplish at least half of the work. A poet's ears are only responsible for one thing: to make verses melodious by means of a pleasing combination of syllabic sounds.

I will show that observing the rules of French poetry makes poems neither metrical nor melodious. Strict conformity to these rules makes French poetry lack rhythm and harmony when recited.

Rules of French poetry only determine the arithmetical number of syllables that should be added to the verses. They state nothing about their quantity, that is to say in poetics, about the length or brevity of the syllables. But because the syllables of French words are sometimes long and sometimes short when pronounced, the silence of our rules on the topic of their combination results in several problems. In the first place, since no rules constrain them, French poems sometimes contain too long a succession of short or long syllables. If these successions carry on for too long, they prevent our being able to detect any rhythm in the pronunciation of the poems.

The rhythm or cadence of a poem consists in an alternation of long and short syllables, varied according to a certain proportion. Too many long syllables used in a sequence really slows down the progression of the poem's recitation. Too many short ones used in a row unhappily speeds it up.

In the second place, when we want to compare the time it takes to read aloud each verse of two French Alexandrine poems[32] connected by a common rhyme, we find enormous differences in length, even though both were composed according to the rules. Let ten of the twelve syllables composing a masculine verse be long, and ten of the following poems be short. There would be a shocking inequality between these poems that appear otherwise equivalent on paper. Thus connected by a common rhythm, these twin poems lose all

32 French Alexandrine poetry is a poetic metre of twelve syllables, and each line is divided into two hemistichs (half-lines) of six syllables each. This was the fashionable style of poetry in Du Bos' day, practiced by Molière and Racine, after having been revived from antiquity by the poets of the Pléiade. The last syllables in each line always rhyme, and there were strict rules about rhyming masculine and feminine words.

the cadence that could have arisen from parity of metre. But the ears, and not the eyes, judge poetry's cadence.

As I have already said, this problem never arises for those who write verses in Latin: the rules prevent it. The arithmetic number of syllables required for the composition of each type of Latin poetry is determinate with regard to syllabic length and brevity. These rules, which were made in order to control the correct proportion between the arithmetical number and the quantity of syllables for each type of poem, determine in the first place that in such and such feet of poetry, a prescribed quantity of syllables must be added. In the second place, when these rules allow the poet a choice of using either long or short syllables in a particular part of the verse, if he chooses to use longer syllables, the rules direct him to use fewer of them. If the poet decides in favour of short syllables, the rules prescribe that he uses more of them. Since the pronunciation of a long syllable lasts twice as long as a short one, all Latin hexametre is found to be the same length in pronunciation, even though some contain a greater number of syllables than others. The quantity of syllables is always balanced by their arithmetical number.

This is why Latin hexametric lines always have the same length when recited, notwithstanding the variety of their progressions. Conversely, our Alexandrine poems are very often unequal, even though they have a nearly uniform progression. This is why some critics have thought it would be impossible to succeed in writing a French epic poem of ten thousand lines. True, the rhythmic uniformity has not hindered the success of our dramatic poems in France or abroad. But these poems with only two thousand lines are good enough to sustain themselves, despite being distasteful. Moreover, it is less noticeable on stage where these sorts of works appear with great brilliance, because the actors run the lines up against one another without taking a breath, or take a breath before finishing the verse to prevent people from noticing the vice of an excessively uniform cadence.

What we said about hexametres can be said of other types of poems. Lines that accelerate because they are composed of short syllables last as long as those that slow down because they are composed of long syllables. For example, wherever the rules permitted, Virgil inserted short syllables in verses that nicely depicted a galloping horse, such that the pronunciation of the lines nearly makes us hear the sound of running:

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.[33]

33 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.596: "with galloping tread the horse hoof shakes the crumbling plain." This

This line contains seventeen syllables, but it does not last longer in pronunciation than the following line containing only thirteen, and which Virgil wrote to describe the work of the Cyclopes, who lift their arms armed with hammers to strike the anvil:

> *Illi inter sese multa vi brachia tollunt*
> *In numerum, versantque tenaci forcipe massam.*[34]

The cadence of these lines is not broken up by this predilection for to using shorter or longer syllables to depict his subject well.

The art of using long and short syllables, an art richly cultivated by the ancients, serves many other purposes. For example, we note that Cicero dared not make frequent use of figures in telling of the ignominious punishment of a Roman citizen whom Verres had ordered whipped with rods. He feared he would be suspected of declamation, and so he found a resource in language's pliability in order to fix his readers' attention for a long time on the image of punishment. The fact was so atrocious that it made listeners stop in their tracks, and it allowed them to insert the figures themselves. This effect is produced by slowness with which one pronounces the simple, and to all appearances artless, expressions that Cicero repeated in order to speak of an action he thought would pique the listener's imagination. *Caedebatur virgis civis Romanus* [*Verr. Act*. 5].[35] We recognize the artistry in the different repetitions of these words, which he varies to disguise the affectation. But let us return to the use of metre using short and long syllables in order to create metrical and melodious phrases.

Romans were utterly taken by the effect that rhythm produces, to which their prose writers were so passionately drawn, that they came very close to sacrificing the meaning and energy of the words to the metre and cadence of phrases. Cicero said that in his day prose already had the same measured cadence as poetry [*Orator*].[36] The essential difference between prose and poetry is not that poetry is constrained by a certain metre whereas prose is freed; it is that prose

---

line is unusual in that it contains five dactyls and a final spondee. It is often cited as a prime example of the capacity of Latin verse to use rhythm to describe an event, in this case the galloping of horses.

34 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.452–453: "They with mighty force, now one, now another, raise their arms in measured cadence, and turn the metal with gripping tongs."

35 Cicero, *Verrine Orations* 2.163: "There in the open market-place of Messana a Roman citizen, gentleman, was beaten with rods …"

36 Cicero, *Orator* 56.188–190.

metre is different from poetic metre. This was not because of the ancient definitions of *soluta* and *stricta oratio*. *Nam etiam poetae quaestionem attulerunt, quidnam esset illud quo ipsi differrent ab oratoribus. Numero maxime videbantur antea et versu, nunc apud oratores jam ipse numerus increbuit*.[37] Cicero then takes up the topic of feet as something as necessary for orators as for poets.

Writing about a century after Cicero, Quintilian speaks of certain *prose writers* of his time who considered themselves equals to the greatest orators. They would boast that their metrical phrases were spoken with such rhythmic recitation that the declamation should be divided between two people. Since the rhythm was so impressive, one could gesture while the other recited, without risking error. *Laudis et gloriae ingenii loco plerique iactant cantari saltarique commentarios suos* [*Dialog. de Orat.*].[38] What we say about actors' recitations will shed light on this passage.

Having noted already the rules of our poetry, which are much more constraining than the rules of Latin poetry, French poets need to find cadence and harmony with only the help of their ears. We can judge the difficulty of this endeavour by reflecting on the fact that word inversion is permitted to French poets only once for every twenty times it is permitted to Latin poets. That said, I am far from thinking that it would be impossible for French poets to create verses both harmonious and metrical. I have merely tried to argue that French poets cannot put as much cadence and harmony into their poems as Latin poets, and that what little they can introduce costs them more, in comparison with all the beauties that Latin poets were able to add at no additional price. To my mind, no poet writing in a modern language over the past three centuries has put more cadence and melody into their poetry than Malherbe has put into his, apparently at great cost, and with a perseverance for which he was indebted to his native country. The reader will not find less in the poems than I will include here to refresh him after so many grammatical observations.

The Marquis de La Fare died in 1712 and everyone in the Republic of Letters was sorry to have lost one of their greatest treasures. Shortly before his death he requested that the Abbé of Chaulieu do his portrait.[39] Instead of paying a

37 Cicero, *Orator* 20.66: "For the poets have given rise to the inquiry as to the difference between them and the orators. It once seemed to be a matter of rhythm and verse, but now rhythm has become common in oratory."

38 Tacitus, *Dialogue on Oratory* 26: "fame, glory, and genius are sacrificed by many to the boast that their compositions are given with the tones of the singer, the gestures of the dancer."

39 Charles Auguste, Marquis de La Fare, Conte of Laugères, Baron of Balazuc (1644–1712), French poet; Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu (1639–1720), French poet and friend of de La

painter to do so, he did it himself. Few people are capable of making a similar savings! Here are the first strokes of this painting, which will endure longer than any of Titian's:

O toi! qui de mon ame es la chere moitié;
Toi, qui joins la délicatesse
Des sentimens d'une maîtresse
A la solidité d'une sure amitié;
La Fare, il faut bientôt que la Parque cruelle
Vienne rompre de si beaux noeuds;
Et malgré nos cris et nos voeux,
Bientôt nous essuierons une absence éternelle.
Chaque jour je sens qu'à grandspas
J'entre dans ce sentier obscur et difficile,
Qui va me conduire là-bas
Rejoindre Catulle et Virgile:
Là, sous des berceaux toujours verds
Affis à côté de Lesbie,
Je leur parlerai de tes vers
Et de ton aimable génie.
Je leur racontrai comment
Tu recueillis si galamment
La Muse qu'ils avoient laissée,
Et comme elle sçut sagement
Par ta paresse autorisée
Préférer avec agrément
Au tour brillant de la pensée
La vérité du sentiment,
Et s'exprimer si tendrement
Que Tibulle encoure maintenant
En est jaloux dans l'Elisée.[40]

Fare. The first publication of Chaulieu's poems was 1724, after the first edition of Du Bos' *Critical Reflections on Painting and Poetry*; these passages are inserted in later editions of the work. Chaulieu's poetry was published with that of de La Fare. Chaulieu and de la Fare were close friends and constant companions, and both lived and wrote about an epicurean lifestyle.

40 Guillaume Chaulieu, "Épitre à Monsieur le Marquis de la Fare, qui m'avoit demandé mon portrait en 1703" [Letter to Mr. Marquis de la Fare, who has asked me for my portrait in 1703], in *Oeuvres de Chaulieu d'après les manuscrits de l'auteur, Tome Premier* [Works of

Would that I were able to publish this whole work. For evidence of my good will, I will give the reader two excerpts of a letter written by the same author to the Prince of Auvergne:[41]

Au milieu cependant de mes peines cruelles,
De la fin de nos jours compagnes trop fidèles,
Je suis tranquille et gai. Quel bien plus précieux
Puis-je espérer jamais de la bonté des Dieux?
Tel qu'un rocher dont la tête
Egale le Mont Athos
Voit a ses pieds la tempête
Troubler le calme des flots;
La mer autour bruit et gronde,
Malgré ces émotions

Chaulieu, based on the manuscripts of the author, Volume One] (La Haye: 1777), 182–183:
O You! Who are the sweet other half of my soul;
You, who combine the delicateness
of the sentiments of a mistress
with the intimacy of a close friend;
La Fare, it should be soon that the cruel Fates
will come to loosen their sturdy knots;
And despite our cries and our wishes,
we will soon succumb to an eternal absence.
Every day I feel that the great steps
I take along that dark and difficult path
will take me there
to join Catullus and Virgil:
There, under the evergreen boughs
swaying on the Lesbian coast,
I will speak to them of your verses
and of your amiable genius.
I will tell them how
you so gallantly collected
the Muse that they had left,
and how she wisely knew
by your proper repose
favourably to prefer
not the brilliance of reason
but the truth of sentiment,
and to express it so tenderly
that Tibullus still remains
envious of it in the Elysian fields.

41 Du Bos apparently refers to Godefroy Maurice de La Tour d'Auvergne, Duke of Bouillon (1636–1721), French nobleman.

Sur son front élevé regne une paix profonde
Que tant d'agitations
Et que les fureurs de l'onde
Respectent à l'égal du nid des Alcions.[42]

Although in the second excerpt the scene is the Champs Elisées, the centre of the mythical city, this bit nevertheless contains the truest praise a poet has ever given.

Dans une foule de guerriers,
Vendôme sur une éminence
Paroît couronné de lauriers;
Vendôme de qui la vaillance
Fait avouer aux Scipions
Que le sac de Carthage et celui de Numance
N'obscurcit pas ses actions;
Et laisse à juger à l'Espagne
Si non bras n'y fit pas plus en une campagne
Qu'ils n'y firent en dix avec vingt Légions.[43]

---

42 Guillaume Chaulieu, "Au Chevalier de Bouillon en 1713" [To the Chevalier de Bouillon], in *Poésies de Chaulieu et du Marquis de la Fare* [Poems by Chaulieu and the Marquis de la Fare] (Paris: 1803), 172:

But in the midst of my cruel troubles,
from the end of our days as most faithful companions,
I am peaceful and content. What more precious
could ever I wish from the gods' great goodness?
Just as a rock in the head
created Mount Athos,
it sees on its shores a wild storm
disturbing the calm of the waves;
All around the sea roars and thunders.
Despite its emotions
on its high front reins a profound peace
that so many disturbances
and the furies of the waves
Respect, as equals, the nests of Alcyone.

Legend has it that Mount Athos was generated after Athos, a giant, threw a rock at the head of Poseidon. The nests of Alcyone refer to the ancient mythology of Alcyone, who was the wife of Ceyx. The two sacrilegiously called themselves 'Zeus' and 'Hera,' which angered Zeus, who threatened to kill Ceyx. The god Morpheus transformed them into halcyon birds. The 'halcyon days' refers to the several days in winter when it is sufficiently tranquil for those birds to lay their eggs and nest.

43 Guillaume Chaulieu, "Au Chevalier de Bouillon en 1713," 174:

The reader who takes the trouble to read the Abbé of Chaulieu's high verses aloud will soon sense that they demand the ears' continuous attention. But harmony makes this attention enjoyable and manages to enslave, so to speak, our ears. They create an effect that goes beyond all the richness of rhymes. Should the strange business of rhyming not be regarded as the lowest function of poetic technique? But since the poet cannot get others to do this job, unlike the painter who can make others prepare his colours, we need to say something about this topic.

In a crowd of warriors,
Vendôme in its eminence
appears crowned with laurels;
Vendôme for whom bravery
confessed to the Scipios
that the sack of Carthage and that of Numantia
    did not obscure its actions;
    and allowed Spain to judge
if its army did not accomplish more in one campaign
than they had done in ten with twenty legions.

CHAPTER 36

Of Rhyme.

Of all the rules of poetry, the injunction to rhyme is the most difficult to follow and contributes the least to the beauties of verses. Rhyme often maims the sense of the text and almost always obscures it. For every happy thought that the passion for rhyming comes across by chance, every day it certainly employs a hundred thoughts that one would disdain to use were it not for the gilding or novelty that rhyme brings to these thoughts.

However, the charm of rhyme is nothing compared to the charm of rhythm and harmony. A syllable ending in a certain sound is not, in itself, beautiful. The beauty of rhyme is a beauty that comes of a relation. It consists in conformity of ending between the last word of a line and the last word of a related line. Thus, we only glimpse this fleeting beauty after two lines and after we have heard the last word of the second line, which rhymes with the first. In several genres of poetry masculine and feminine rhymes are commonly intertwined, with the first and fourth masculine and the second and third feminine.[1] One then feels the charm of rhyme only after the third and fourth lines.

Speaking here only of poems in which the rhyme appears with all of its sparkle and beauty, one feels the charm after the second line. The appeal of rhyme comes from the similarity of sound, more or less perfect, between the last words of two lines. Most listeners who do not belong to the trade, or who are not keen on rhymes, though they do belong to the trade, no longer remember the first rhyming word distinctly enough, when they hear the second, to be pleased by the consummation of the rhyme. A rhyme pleases the ear so little that its value is known by means of reflection rather than sense.

Some will say that there must be more beauty in rhyme than I have allowed. The charm of rhyme, some will add, is experienced by all nations. They all have rhyming poetry.

For a start, I do not deny the charm of rhyme. I only value that charm well below that which comes from the rhythm and harmony of poetry, and which is continually experienced during the recital of metrical verse. Rhythm and harmony are lights that always shine. Rhyme is only a lightning bolt that disappears after having flashed. Indeed, the flashiest rhyme makes only a fleeting

1 In French poetry, in a masculine rhyme the final syllable is not a silent 'e,' even if the word is feminine. In a feminine rhyme the final syllable is a silent 'e,' even if the word is masculine.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_040

impression. Let us estimate the value of some verses only by the difficulties one must overcome to make them. Without a doubt, it is less difficult to rhyme brilliantly than to write rhythmic and harmonious verses. Every word poses a difficulty when writing rhythmic and harmonious verse. Nothing assists a French poet in overcoming these difficulties other than his genius, his ear, and his perseverance. No algorithm substitutes for art. Nothing comes to his rescue. Difficulties are not so persistent when one wants to rhyme brilliantly. And a dictionary of rhymes, the favourite book of serious rhymers, helps one overcome these difficulties. Whatever they say, they all have this book in their back room.

In the second place, I agree that we rhyme all of our verses and that our neighbours rhyme most of theirs. Rhyme is even well established in Asia and America. But most of these peoples who rhyme are barbarians and the people who do it the most, and who have become civilized nations, were barbarians and nearly illiterate when their poetry was established. The languages that they spoke did not lend themselves to perfect poetry when these people laid, so to speak, the first foundations of their poetry. True, the European nations, of which I speak, have subsequently become learned and literate. They were civilized only a long time after they established a body politic and the national practice was already established and further strengthened by its lengthy duration. Consequently, when these nations became cultivated by a judicious study of Greek and Latin, they substantially civilized and rectified these practices. But it has not been possible to change them entirely.

An architect who renovates a medieval building can certainly make some changes and make it habitable. But he cannot correct the defects that come from the initial construction. He would not convert the building into a systematic piece of construction. In order to do that, he must demolish the old building and erect a new one on other foundations.

Thus poets who have worked in France and neighbouring countries have embellished and have prettified, if you will pardon this word, modern poetry. But they have not been able to change its original structure, which has its foundation in the nature and genius of modern languages. Time after time, learned French poets have attempted to change the rules of our poetry and introduce the use of metrical lines, in the manner of the Greeks and Romans. They have not been successful.

Rhyme, like fiefs and duels, owes its origins to the barbarism of our ancestors. The peoples who invaded the Roman Empire, and from which modern nations descend, already had poets, albeit barbarian ones, when they established themselves in Gaul and other provinces of the Empire. The languages in which these uneducated poets wrote were not polished enough to be handled according to the rules of metre. The languages did not even permit the attempt.

Consequently, they thought that it would be elegant to have two parts of a work that are consecutive or in the same relative position and the same length, end in the same sound. The same final sound, repeated after a certain number of syllables, contributed a type of ornament. It seemed to indicate or, if you like, indicated a cadence in the verses. This is apparently how rhyme became established.

In the countries invaded by the barbarians, new peoples were formed, composed of a mixture of newcomers and old inhabitants. The practices of the dominant nation prevailed in several matters, principally in the common language. This was made from the language spoken by the old inhabitants and the one spoken by the newcomers. For example, the language that evolved in Gaul, where the old inhabitants usually spoke Latin, when the Franks settled there, preserved only some words derived from Latin. The syntax of this language was entirely different from that of Latin, as we have already said. In short, the newborn language was forced to rhyme lines, and rhyme passed even into Latin (which continued to be spoken in certain circles). Leonine verses,[2] Latin verses rhymed as French is, were in use in about the 8th century. They were still in use when these were written:

> *Fingitur hac specie bonitatis odore refertus,*
> *Istius ecclesiae fundator rex Dagobertus*.[3]

Leonine verse disappeared with barbarism, as this light dawned in the 15th century.

2 Leonine verse is a type of verse attributed to a probably apocryphal monk named Leonius. This sort of verse employs internal rhymes, that is, words or phrases in the middle of lines are rhymed with words or phrases in the middle of other lines.

3 "Shaped in this form, Dagobert, king, founder of this church, and filled with a hint of excellence." This is an epitaph for Dagobert III (699–715), King of the Franks from 711 until his early death.

CHAPTER 37

That the Words of Our Native Language Make a Greater Impression on Us Than the Words of a Foreign Language.

An incontestable proof of the superiority of Latin poetry compared to French poetry is that Latin poetry is more touching, more affecting, than French poetry for the French who know Latin. However, the impression that expression of a foreign language make on us is much weaker than the impression made by expressions of our native language. From the fact that Latin poetry makes a greater impression on us than French poetry, it follows that Latin poetry is more perfect and more capable of pleasing than French poetry. Latin poetry does not naturally have the same power over a French ear as it had on a Latin ear. Latin poetry does not have the same power as French poetry ought to have on a French ear.

With the exception of a small number of words that can pass for imitative words, our words have only an arbitrary connection to the ideas to which they are attached. This connection is the effect of caprice or chance. For example, the idea of a horse could be attached to the word 'joist' and the idea of the piece of wood that this word denotes could be attached to the word 'horse.' Only during the first years of our lives is the relation between a certain word and a certain idea so firmly established that the word seems to have a natural power, that is, a particular suitableness, to denote the thing of which it is only an arbitrarily instituted sign. Thus when we learn from childhood the meaning of the verb 'to love,' when this word is the first that we have reserved to express the thing of which it is the sign, it appears to us to have a natural power. However, the force that we find in it comes only from our education, and from its having seized, so to speak, the first place in our memory.

When we learn a foreign language, after we reached a certain age, we do not immediately link the words of this language to the corresponding idea. Rather, we relate them to the words of our native language, which are associated with these ideas. Thus, a Frenchman who learns English does not immediately connect the English word 'God' to the idea of God, but rather to the word *'Dieu*.' When he subsequently intends to say 'God,' the first idea that occurs to him is the meaning of this word in French. The idea of God occurs to him only second. It seems that he must first translate the first word to himself.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_041

People may regard, if they like, this explanation as arcane. It will still always be true that our brains have not been trained in childhood to form certain ideas quickly, as soon as certain sounds strike the ears. These words make a weaker and slower impression on us than words that our organs are trained to respond to since childhood. The effect made by words depends on the mechanical workings of our organs and, consequently, it must depend on the ease and quickness of their movements. This is why the same speech strikes a person with a lively temperament and one with a slow temperament at different speeds, even though they eventually take the same interest in the thing in question.

Experience, which is more compelling concerning matters of fact than all reasoning, tells us that things are so. A Frenchman who only knows Spanish as a second language is not affected by the word '*querer*' as he is by the word '*aimer*,' even though they mean the same thing.

However, Latin poetry pleases and affects more than French poetry. We cannot deny the testimony of foreigners for whom French is much more familiar these days than Latin. They all say that French poetry is less pleasing than Latin poetry, even though most of them learn French before they learn Latin. Even the French, who know Latin well enough to easily understand poets who wrote in this language, share their opinion. Suppose that a French poet and a Latin poet address the same subject and they are equally successful. The French of whom I speak find more pleasure in reading the Latin poetry. We know the *bon mot* of Bourbon: "I think that I am drinking water when I read French verse."[1] Finally, French and foreigners, referring to those who know our language as well as we do and who have studied both Horace and Boileau, could not stand the mechanical comparison of Latin and French poetry. Thus we must find in Latin poetry a virtue that is not in French poetry. A foreigner who makes his fortune at a court sooner than a native is believed to have more merit than the person he has left in his wake.

1 Nicholas Bourbon (ca. 1574–1644), French writer of Latin and Greek poetry. See John Aikin and Mr. Nicholson, et al. *General Biography; or Lives, Critical and Historical, of the Most Eminent Persons of All Ages, Countries, Conditions, and Professions*, vol. 2 (London: 1801), 257.

CHAPTER 38

That the Painters of Raphael's Time Had No Advantage over Those of Today. Of the Painters of Antiquity.

Thus, our French poets are to be pitied when we compare them to Latin poets. The Latin poets had so much assistance and freedom to do better than French poets can do. French poets could give Quintilian's answer, on behalf of Latin poets, to those critics who expected Latin writers to be as touching as Greek writers: make our language as rich in expressiveness and as pleasant to the ear as the language of those that you claim we must equal to deserve your esteem. *Det mihi in loquendo eamdem jucunditatem et parem copiam* [*Instit*. bk. 12].[1] The architect who could only build with brick could not build an edifice that pleases as much as one he could build with stone and marble. Our painters are in this respect more fortunate than our poets. Painters who work today use the same colours and same tools as were used by painters whose works can be compared to those our painters produce every day. That is, our painters write in the very language that was spoken by their predecessors. In speaking of painters who proceed our own, I do not mean to speak of the painters of the time of Alexander the Great or the time of Augustus. We do not know with sufficient clarity the mechanical details of ancient painting to make a comparison with the mechanics of modern painting. By the predecessors of our painters I mean to speak only of painters who have worked since the renaissance of letters and the fine arts.

I do not know whether any paintings of ancient Greece have come down to us. Only a small number remain from ancient Rome. It is very difficult to estimate, on the basis of an inspection of the type of painting that survives, either the skill of the best craftsmen of that time, or the colours that they employed. We cannot know for certain that they had colours that we no longer have. But it appears likely that they did not have colours that our craftsmen acquire from America and some other countries, with which Europe has had regular trade for only two centuries.

A large number of remaining ancient works of painting are mosaics, that is, made with small coloured stones and shards of glass, fitted together so that the

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.10.35: "let me have the same attractiveness of language, and equal abundance."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_042

whole imitates the shape and colour of the objects represented. For example, the palace that the Barberinis have built in the town of Palestrina, twenty-five miles from Rome, has a large mosaic piece, twelve feet long by six feet high.[2] These mosaics are the floor in a sort of large niche whose vault supports two separate ramps, by which one reaches the first landing of the main staircase of this building. This superb piece is a type of geographic map of Egypt. It is supposed to be the very floor that Sulla installed in the Temple of Fortuna Praeneste, which Pliny mentions in his *History*, 36.25.[3] A small engraving of the mosaic appeared in Kircher's *Latium*.[4] In 1721, Cardinal Carlo Barberini had it engraved on four large sheets.[5] The ancient craftsman used several types of vignettes, of the sort geographers use to fill empty spaces on their maps, to decorate his map. These vignettes represent people, animals, buildings, hunts, ceremonies, and several aspects of the social and natural history of ancient Egypt. Beneath the things depicted their names are written in Greek letters, just as the names of provinces are written on a map of the whole Kingdom of France.

Poussin has used several things from this work to embellish several of his pictures, among others the one that represents the arrival of the Holy Family in Egypt. This great painter was still alive when this superb mosaic was excavated from the ruins of a temple of Serapis. This must be, as we would say, a chapel of the famous Temple of Fortuna Praeneste. Everyone knows that Praeneste is the same town as Palestrina. Fortunately, the mosaic was recovered very complete and very well preserved. Unfortunately for students, it only left its tomb five years after Bishop Suarès of Vaison published his book *Praenestes antiquae libri duo* [Published at Rome in 1655].[6] The map of which I speak was then buried in the caves of the Bishop of Palestrina where it was almost invisible. One could

2 The Barbarini palace is built on the foundations of the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia from the 2nd century BC. The Colonna family acquired the site in the 11th century and built a palace. The Barberini family acquired the palace in 1630, rebuilt it, and installed the Nile mosaics. The mosaics represent the flooding of the Nile were made in Palestrina by Egyptian artists ca. 100–80 BC.

3 Praeneste is the ancient name of Palestrina. Lucius Corneilius Sulla Felix, usually known as Sulla (ca. 138–78 BC), Roman general and statesman.

4 Athanasius Kircher (ca. 1602–1680), German Jesuit scholar and author of approximately forty works on religion, biology, geology and medicine. His books include *Latium* (1669).

5 Du Bos is mistaken here. Cardinal Carlo Barberini died in 1704. The engravings in question were published by Cardinal Melchior de Polignac (1661–1742), French cardinal, diplomat, and man of letters. The publication date, 1721, is correct. See, Paul G.P. Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden: 1995), 281, n. 2.

6 Joseph-Marie Suarès (1599–1677), French antiquarian and Bishop of Vaison. The volume is

only see something by washing the parts which had already been discovered and these one could only see by torch light. Thus Suarez could only give us in his work [*Praenest. Antiq*. bk. 1 p. 50][7] a description of some pieces that the Cavalier del Pozzo had drawn *in situ* [Ibid. Book 2, p. 228].

In Rome and several places in Italy fragments of ancient mosaic can still be seen. Most of these have been engraved and included in several different collections by Pietro Santi Bartoli.[8] But for several reasons one would judge the painting of the ancients to be poor if one were to judge on the basis of these mosaics. The learned know very well that we would not do justice to Titian if we were to judge his merit on the basis of the mosaics in the Church of San Marco in Venice, which were made from the designs of this master colourist. It is impossible to imitate with stones and pieces of glass, which the ancients used to make mosaics, all of the beauties and graces that the brush of a skilled man, a master of shading colours, puts in a picture. The lines and tints at each point cannot be completely as one imagines. In fact, the most highly praised mosaics, those that from a certain distance appear to be painted pictures, are mosaic copies of ordinary portraits. Such, for example, is the portrait of Pope Paul V in the Villa Borghese in Rome.[9]

Even in Rome, only a small number of antique paintings remain. These are the ones that I remember having seen. First there are the wedding picture in the Villa Aldobrandini[10] and the figurines of the Pyramid of Cestius.[11] All connoisseurs have at least seen copies of them. Second, there are the paintings in the Palazzo Barbarini in Rome.[12] These were found in subterranean grottos

---

Praenestes Antiquae Libri Duo (Rome: 1655). In Roman mythology, Praenestes is the founder of the state of Praeneste, in Latium. His father is Latinus, who is the son of Odysseus and Circe.

7 Suarès, *Praenestes antiquae* 1.50.

8 Pietro Santi Bartoli (1635–1700), Italian engraver and painter. As a young man he was a student of Poussin but gave up painting to concentrate on engraving and antiquarianism. He was employed by Queen Christina of Sweden during her exile in Rome.

9 Du Bos refers to the *Portrait of Pope Paul V* (still in the Villa Borghese) by Marcello Provenzale (1577–1639). Provenzale uses particularly small tesserae, small blocks of glass, stone or tile, to achieve remarkable results.

10 In about 1600 this fresco was recovered from an ancient Roman house. It was owned at first by the Aldobrandini family but was acquired in 1818 by the Vatican. The fresco depicts ten people, including a bride being encouraged by Venus.

11 The Pyramid of Cestius (ca. 18–12 BC) is the tomb of Gaius Cestius. The burial chamber, opened in 1660, contains remnants of frescos. These were engraved by Bartoli.

12 The Palazzo Barberini was commissioned by Maffeo Barberini and completed in 1627. It now houses the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica.

when this villa had its foundations laid. These pictures are the landscape or nymphaeum of which Lucas Holstenius[13] has published a copy together with an explanation of the picture; the Venus restored by Carlo Maratti;[14] and a figure of a Roman holding a Victory. Connoisseurs who are unfamiliar with the history of these [latter] two frescoes take one to be by Raphael and the other to be by Correggio. The Palazzo Farnese has a piece of ancient painting, found in the Villa of Emperor Hadrian at Tivoli. A private person's garden, near Santo Gregorio, has the remains of a ceiling. We saw, in the first edition of this work, several other ancient paintings from the Villa Farnese on the Palatine Hill, in the place previously occupied by the Imperial Palace. These paintings adorned the ceiling of a bath. However, neither the Duke of Parma, to whom they belonged, nor the King of the Two Sicilies, who has since had them taken to Naples, has had them engraved. Dr. Mead,[15] known throughout Europe for his talents and love of the arts, has decorated his study with a piece of ancient painting. It was also found in the ruins of the Imperial Palace. He has had this precious fragment engraved. It represents, we must believe, the Emperor Augustus beside Agrippa, Maecenas, and some other people. Augustus gives a crown to a figure who is no longer visible. The Marquis Capponi,[16] who joins great erudition to a unique taste for everything related to antiquity, has also had engraved a unique piece from his private collection. This is the portrait of an architect, seen with instruments of his art. This picture was discovered in a tomb.

At one time, several other fragments of pictures could be seen in the buildings commonly known as the ruins of the Baths of Titus.[17] Some of these have perished, such as the picture representing Coriolanus with his mother persuad-

13 Lucas Holstenius, known as Lukas Hoste (1596–1662), German historian, geographer, and man of letters. Du Bos refers to Holstenius's book *Vetus pictura Nymphaeum referens commentariolo explicata a Luca Holstenio* [An Old Picture of Nymphs, reporting from the commentary explicated by Lucas Hostenius] (Rome: 1676).

14 Carlo Maratta (or Maratti) (1625–1713), Italian painter active at Rome.

15 Richard Mead (1673–1754), English physician and member of the Royal Society. His reputation rested in large part on his important *Short Discourse concerning Pestilential Contagion* (London: 1720) but he was also a collector of paintings, books, and items from the ancient world.

16 Alessandro Gregorio Capponi (1683–1746), Italian archaeologist and director of the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

17 Du Bos refers to the Baths of Titus (*Thermae Titi*), which were Roman public baths built by order of the Emperor Nero. They are now lost due to exposure to the weather. The baths featured paintings by Famulus, an artist mentioned by Pliny the Elder, are in fact the Domus Aurea.

ing him not to attack Rome. Annibale Carracci drew this picture.[18] This drawing has been engraved and today it is in the possession of Crozat,[19] who received it from Canon Vittoria.[20] Others have been stolen. Cardinal Massimo took from the Baths four pieces supposed to represent the history of Adonis and two other fragments. These scholarly relics passed on his death into the hands of the Marquis Massimo.[21] Prints of these are in de La Chausse's book, *Le Pitture antiche delle Grotte di Roma*.[22] This author has provided in this book several drawings of antique paintings which have not been made public. Among them is the drawing of the ceiling of a room that was excavated near Santo Stefano Rontondo in 1705, that is, a year before the publication of his work. The figure of a woman painted on a piece of stucco, which previously belonged to Canon Vittoria, is currently in the Paris collection of the younger Crozat.

As to what remains in the Baths of Titus, there are some semi-effaced pictures. Father de Monfaucon [*Diar. Ital.* p. 132][23] and Francesco Bartoli [*Pitture antiche delle Grotte di Roma*] have provided a print of the most complete fragment to be seen there, a landscape.

In 1702, one could still see, in the ruins of ancient Capua, about a league from the modern town of Capua, a buried gallery, in Latin: *cripto porticus*. The vault of this gallery was painted with representations of figures who were depicted in

18 According to Giovan Bellori's *Life of Annibale Carracci*, Carracci was summoned to Rome by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese to decorate his palace with art. Carracci visited the grottoes of the Domus Aurea and copied one of its panels depicting Coriolanus and three women. Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1613–1696), Italian painter and art historian.

19 Du Bos refers to Pierre Crozat (1665–1740), or his brother Antoine Crozat (ca. 1655–1738). The sons of peasants, the Crozat brothers became wealthy merchants and prominent art collectors.

20 The engraving is by P.S. Bartoli, printed in *Admiranda romanarum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia* [Wonders of Roman antiquities and the remains of its ancient sculptures] (Rome: 1643), plate 83. Vincenzo Vittoria (1658–1712), Canon of Xativa and antiquarian.

21 Du Bos likely refers to Camillo Massimo (1620–1677), Italian Cardinal and patron of the arts. He patronized major artists of the period, including Poussin, Lorrain, and Velázquez. He also took an interest in antiquities. Du Bos likely also refers to Fabrizio Camillio Massimo (1606–1693), Marquis di Roccasecca.

22 Michel-Ange de La Chausse, also known as Michael Angelus Causeus (1660–1724), French antiquarian. Du Bos refers to Pietro Santi Bartoli, Francesco Bartoli, Pietro Bellori, and Michel-Ange de La Chausse, *Le Pitture antiche delle Grotte di Roma* [Ancient Painting from the Roman Grotto] (Rome: 1706).

23 Bernard de Montfaucon, *Diarium italicum* (Paris: 1702), 132. Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741), French Benedictine monk. He is regarded as a founder of modern archaeology and a founder of palaeography.

various ways. In 1709, Prince Emmanuel of Elbeuf,[24] while working on his country house, situated between Naples and Mount Vesuvius, near the seashore, found a building decorated with ancient paintings. But so far as I know, no one has published a sketch of these paintings, any more than those of ancient Capua.

I do not know other currently existing antique paintings made with a brush besides those pieces I have mentioned. True, in the past two centuries quite a few more have been excavated in Rome and in other parts of Italy. However, most of these paintings have perished, I am not sure how, and only copies remain. Cardinal Massimo has made a very fine collection of these copies and, due to an odd course of events, he brought from Spain to Rome the most valuable parts of his collection. [A short time ago this collection of copies was taken to England, and it is in the hands of Dr. Mead.] During his nunciature, he made copies of a portfolio in the King of Spain's study. It contained sketches of several antique paintings found in Rome since people began, in the 15th century, to enthusiastically search the ruins, looking for remains of antiquity. The Cavalier dal Pozzo,[25] whose name is celebrated among lovers of painting, and for whom Poussin painted his first pictures of the seven sacraments, also made a very fine collection of illustrations of antique paintings. Pope Clement XI[26] bought this collection during his pontificate to put in the private library that he had established.

However, nearly all of the paintings shown in these illustrations have been lost. Those from the Tomb of the Nasonii, excavated near Pontremoli in 1674, no longer exist.[27] Nothing remains of the paintings from this mausoleum except the coloured copies made for Colbert[28] and Cardinal Massimo. Engraved prints made Pietro Santo Bartoli, together with commentary by Bellori, were pub-

---

24 Emmanuel Maurice (1677–1763), Duke of Elbeuf and Prince of Lorraine; French nobleman.

25 Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657), Italian antiquarian and patron of the arts. He collected drawings of Roman sculptures and paintings and was a patron of Poussin.

26 Clement XI, né Giovanni Francesco Albani (1649–1721), Pope from 1700 until his death. He was a noted patron of the arts and sciences and had a strong interest in archaeology.

27 *L'Idea del Bello: un viaggio per Roma nel seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori* [The Idea of Beauty: a trip through Rome in the seventeenth century with Giovan Pietro Bellori] (Rome: 1674) describes and displays Pietro Santi Bartoli's drawings based on ancient paintings located in the Tomb of the Nasonii in Rome. This tomb was excavated the same year that this book was published. This was the tomb of Quintus Nasonius Ambrosius (fl. 2nd century AD), and was adorned with a considerable amount of art. The tomb dates from ca. AD 150.

28 Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), French politician; able Finance Minister of Louis XIV.

lished in Rome as a folio [In 1680].[29] After forty years, scarcely traces of the original paintings remained, although care had been taken to rub on a garlic tincture that is well suited to conserving frescoes. Despite this precaution, they have been destroyed.

Antiquarians maintain that this is the fate of all ancient paintings that have spent a great many years interred and sealed in places where exterior air cannot act on them. Exterior air destroys these paintings as soon as they are re-exposed to its action. In contrast, external air only damages paintings buried in places to which it has had free access as it damages all frescoes. Thus the paintings that were dug up twenty years ago at the Villa Corsini on the Janiculum[30] should have lasted a long time. Exterior air retained free access to the tombs adorned with murals. However, due to a mistake by the owner, they did not last long. Fortunately, we have Bartoli's engraved prints of them [*Libro de Sepulchri antichi*].[31] This event will never happen again. Pope Clement XI had a great love for the arts and antiquities. Unable to prevent the destruction of the painting in the Villa Corsini under an earlier pontificate, he did not want the learned to be able to reproach him with similar accidents, which they consider serious problems. Consequently, at the outset of his reign he issued an edict, written by Cardinal Giambattista Spinola,[32] Chamberlain of the Holy See. All owners of places with remains of ancient painting were forbidden to demolish the masonry to which the paintings were attached, without express permission.

Obviously, we cannot without temerity undertake to compare antique and modern painting on the basis of fragments of paintings, at least, damaged by time. Besides, what remains was painted in Rome on walls only a long time after the death of famous Greek painters. From the writings of the ancients, it appears that painters who worked in Rome during the reign of Augustus and his immediate successors, were considerably inferior to the celebrated Apelles[33]

---

29 Pietro Santi Bartoli, *Admiranda Romanorum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia anaglyphico opere elaborata ex marmoreis exemplaribus quae Romae adhuc extant* [The Wonders of Ancient Rome] (Rome: 1693). Note that Du Bos gives the wrong publication date.

30 Du Bos refers to the 15th-century villa, not the current Palazzo Corsini (1730–1740), that incorporated the parts of the villa. The villa stood on the Janiculum Hill in Rome.

31 Du Bos probably refers to *Veterum lucernae sepulcrales, collectae ex cavernis et specubus subterraneis* [On the highlights of ancient sepulchres, collected from underground caves and caverns] (1691 and 1704), produced by Bartoli in cooperation with Alexander Duke and Giovan Pietro Bellori.

32 Giambattista Spinola (1615–1704), Italian Cardinal.

33 Apelles of Kos (fl. 4th century BC), celebrated Greek painter. According to Pliny the Elder, he was the greatest of ancient painters.

and his illustrious contemporaries. Pliny wrote his history during the reign of Vespasian. The arts had already attained the highest point of perfection that they would during the Empire. Yet Pliny does not include among the great ornaments in the Capital of the Universe, any picture that he gives us reason to believe had been made during the time of the Caesars. Thus, we cannot form on the basis of the remaining fragments of ancient painting, and the remnants of the works made in Imperial Rome, any certain judgement concerning the degree of perfection Greeks and Romans achieved in this fine art. One could not even determine, on the basis of these fragments, the degree of perfection that painting had achieved at the time that they were made.

Before we can judge, on the basis of a given work, the level art had attained when the work was made, it would be necessary to know with certainly the work's standing at the time and whether it passed for an excellent work of its kind. For example, it would be an injustice to our age if someone were to judge the level our drama has attained on the basis of tragedies of Pradon[34] or the comedies of Hauteroche.[35] In periods most productive of excellent artists, there is still a large number of mediocre ones. In such a time, there are still more bad works than good ones. We would run the risk of judging on the basis of mediocre works if, for example, we judged the state of painting in the Rome of Augustus on the basis of the figures in the Pyramid of Cestius. It is very probable that these frescos were made at the time the mausoleum was erected, and consequently during the reign of this emperor. We do not know the relative standing, among the painters of his time, of the artist who made this fresco. What happens today in every country is enough to teach us that insiders often give the most important commissions to artists very inferior to those that they neglect.

We can easily compare antique sculpture to ours because we are certain that we still have the masterpieces of Greek sculpture, that is to say, the most beautiful sculpture of antiquity. The Romans, in the period of their splendor, the time of Augustus, only argued about political science with the illustrious men of Greece. They recognized the Greeks as their betters in the arts, and particularly in the art of sculpture.

---

34 Jacques Pradon (1644–1698), French playwright. In the view of many critics, Pradon's plays are unimaginative, prudish, formulaic, and historically uniformed.

35 Noël Lebreton, sieur de Hauteroche (1617–1707), French actor and playwright. His comedies were imitations of Molière's but he lacked Molière's talent for developing characters and depicting manners.

Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera,
credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore voltus […]
tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
hae tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem.
[*Aeneid* Bk. 6][36]

Pliny feels the same as Virgil. But the most valuable works of Greece had been exported to Rome and we are certain that we have today the most beautiful works that were in the capital of the world, after it had been enriched with the most valuable masterpieces to come from the Greek chisel. Pliny [Pliny, *Hist*. Bk. 36][37] singled out the statue of Hercules, presently in the courtyard of the Palazzo Farnese, as one of the most beautiful pieces of sculpture in Rome. Pliny wrote when Rome had already looted the east. This same author also tells us [*Histor*. Bk. 55][38] that the *Laocoön*,[39] today in a courtyard of the Castello del Belvedere, was the most valuable piece of sculpture in Rome in his day. The description that Pliny gives of the statues that compose the *Laocoön* group and its location at the time he wrote (which is identical to the place where it was excavated more than two centuries ago), make it certain, despite the reservations of some scholars, that the statues that we have are the ones of which Pliny spoke. Thus, we are in a position to judge whether the ancients surpassed us in the art of sculpture. If I may put it this way, the parties at law have stated their cases. Now, I have never heard a judgement in favour of modern sculptors. I have never preferred Michelangelo's *Moses* to the *Laocoön* in the Belvedere. Even so, I admit that it would be unwise to maintain that ancient Greek and Roman painters surpass our painters, since ancient sculptors surpassed modern ones. True, painting and sculpture are two sisters. However, they are not so alike that they share the same destiny. Sculpture, although the younger, may leave her elder sister behind.

---

36 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.847–848, 851–852: "Others, I doubt not, shall with softer mould beat out the breathing bronze, coax from the marble features to the life, … you, Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice."

37 Pliny, *Natural History* 36.4: "There is at Rome … a Hercules, too, by Menestratus, [which] is greatly admired."

38 Pliny, *Natural History* 36.5: "The Laocoön, which is in the palace of the emperor Titus, is a work to be preferred to all others, either in painting or sculpture."

39 The *Laocoön* is one of the most famous sculptures from the ancient world. It depicts Laocoön and his sons being killed serpents. In the version of the story in the *Aeneid*, Laocoön is a priest of Poseidon and was killed because he attempted warn the Trojans about the Trojan Horse. There is considerable doubt about the exact date of the *Laocoön* and about whether it is an original or a copy. There is consensus that the work is Greek in origin and that the statue found in 1506, and currently in the Vatican, is the one mentioned by Pliny.

It would not be less audacious to decide this question on the grounds that our pictures do not produce the prodigious effects sometimes made by the pictures painted by ancient painters. Experience suggests that the accounts of the writers who reported these effects were exaggerated. We do not even know what would have to be reshuffled to extract the precise truth. We do not know what part the novelty of the art of painting can have contributed to the impression that certain pictures made on spectators. The first pictures, although crude, must have appeared divine works. Admiration for a newborn art easily causes those who speak of its products to exaggerate. Tradition receives these outré narratives and sometimes it likes to make them more marvellous than when they were received. We even find in ancient writers impossible things presented as realities and ordinary things regarded as a wonder. Besides, can we know what effect several pictures by Raphael, Rubens, and Annibale Carracci would have produced on people as sensitive and as passionate as the compatriots of the painters of ancient Greece?

Finally, only by means of comparison can we give a somewhat precise idea of pictures to people who have not seen them at all and who are not familiar with the style of the painter who produced them. In speaking to someone about the pictures of a painter that he does not know, we are moved by instinct to use this method of comparison. We give an idea of an unknown painter by comparing him to known painters. This method is the best method of description when dealing with matters of sentiment. He uses colour a bit like so-and-so, we say; he designs like someone else; his composition is like some other. Now, we do not have the sentiments about ancient Greek paintings of someone who has seen our modern paintings. We do not even know what comparison we would make between the surviving fragments of antique painting and the beautiful Greek pictures that no longer exist.

Modern writers, who have treated ancient painting, make us more learned without making us more capable of determining whether ancient painters were superior to modern ones. These writers are content to gather passages from ancient authors, who speak of painting, and provide a philological commentary on them. They do not illuminate these passages by examining our contemporary painters or even by relating these passages to the fragments of antique painting that still exist. Thus, I think that, in order to form as clear an idea as we can of ancient painting, we must separately consider what we can know for certain about the composition, expression, and colouring of ancient paintings.

We have thought it proper in this work to divide pictorial composition from poetic composition. As for pictorial composition, it is necessary to state that, on the basis of the works that remain, ancient painters do not appear supe-

rior, or even equal, to Raphael, Rubens, Paolo Veronese, or Le Brun. Supposing that the ancients made nothing better in the way of bas-reliefs, medallions and paintings than those that remain to us, they have not equalled the moderns. To say nothing of the other defects of ancient designers, their perspective is usually bad. De La Chausse wrote, in speaking of the landscape from the Baths of Titus, *Da questa Pittura si cognosce che gli Antichi sono stati altretanto infelici nella prospettiva, ch'eruditi nel disegno* [*Pittur. Antich*. p. 13].[40]

As for poetical composition, the ancients prided themselves a lot for excelling in invention, and since they were great designers, they had all kinds of opportunity to succeed in poetical composition. In order to give an idea of the progress that the ancients made in this part of painting, which includes the great art of expression, we will relate what ancient writers said on this matter. Of all parts of painting, poetical composition is the easiest to describe in words. It is the part that describes itself best.

Pliny has spoken more systematically than other writers. He regards expressions of emotion and other poetical inventions as a great virtue of an artist. It is apparent from his writings that this part of the art was honoured in Greece and that it was cultivated there as much as in the Roman school. This author relates, as an important historical point, that it was a Theban named Aristides who first showed that it possible to depict emotions and that it was possible to express with lines and colours the sentiments of a mute figure, in short, that it is possible to speak to the eyes. Pliny speaks of a picture by Aristides[41] representing a woman stabbed by a dagger, a child still nursing at her breast. Pliny speaks with as much taste and feeling as Rubens could have done in speaking of a beautiful painting by Raphael. We see, he says, on the face of this woman, already wounded and showing signs of imminent death, the most vivid sentiments and the most fervent concern of maternal tenderness. Fear that her infant will hurt itself by suckling blood instead of milk was so well portrayed on the mother's face, and the pose of the body complemented this expression so well, that it was easy to grasp the thoughts occupying the dying woman.

One cannot speak of expression as well as Pliny and other writers of antiquity have spoken when one has not seen a large number of highly expressive paintings. Moreover, *Laocoön* and the *Blade-Sharpener*,[42] etc., had an expres-

40 Bartoli et al., *Le Pitture antiche delle Grotte di Roma*, 13: "From this picture it is obvious that the ancients were as unhappy in their perspective as they were learned in their design."

41 Aristides of Thebes (fl. 360–330 BC), one of the most admired painters of the ancient world.

42 This is a Roman copy, made in the 1st century BC, of a Greek statue. It depicts a man crouching and sharpening a knife. Currently, it is thought to be part of a group of statues

sion so learned and correct that they made the ancients connoisseurs, even picky ones, of expression. Besides the statues that I have mentioned, the ancients had an infinity of excellent comparison pieces. They could not be mistaken in judging the expression of emotion in a picture, or take mediocre paintings for exquisite ones.

We also read in Pliny a great many facts and several details that prove that Greek painters prided themselves on excelling in expression at least as much as painters of the Roman school did. Most of the praise that ancient authors gave to the pictures of which they spoke was admiration for the expression. Ausonius[43] extols Timomachus'[44] *Medea*, in which Medea is depicted at the instant in which she raised the dagger against her children.[45] We see, writes the poet, rage and compassion mixed together on her face. Through the fury that will cause her to commit an abominable murder, we can still see the remains of maternal tenderness.

> *Immanem exhausit rerum in diuersa laborem,*
> *Fingeret adfectum matris ut ambiguum.*
> *Ira subset lachrymis, miseratio non caret ira;*
> *Alternum uideas ut sit in alterutro*.[46]

We know with what enthusiasm Pliny extols Timanthes'[47] ingenious idea: he depicted Agamemnon, his head veiled at the sacrifice of Iphigenia to indicate

---

depicting Apollo flaying Marsyas. In Greek mythology, Marsyas challenged the god Apollo to a music contest. After he lost, Marsyas was flayed alive. The sculpture was excavated in the 16th century and is currently in the Uffizi.

43 Decimius Magnus Ausonius (ca. 310–ca. 395), Roman poet and rhetorician.

44 Timomachus of Byzantium (fl. 1st century BC), highly regarded painter. Julius Caesar owned two paintings by Timomachus.

45 In Greek mythology, Medea assists Jason in retrieving the Golden Fleece, symbol of kingly authority. Medea and Jason marry and have children. Despite this marriage, and all of the assistance Medea has rendered, Jason abandons her for the daughter of the King of Corinth. Medea revenges herself on Jason by killing their mutual children.

46 *Epigrammata Bobiensia* 53.3–6:

> He accomplished a great work of things in oppositions
> so as to shape the wavering emotion of the mother.
> Anger lies under her tears, her pity does not lack wrath;
> you may see in succession how she wavers.

Du Bos attributes the epigram to Ausonius, which was originally the assumption but the authorship is currently less sure. The similarity with Antiphilus of Byzantium's epigram (136 in the *Loeb Greek Anthology*, volume 16) describing the same painting suggests that this epigram is a Latin translation of the Greek.

47 Timanthes of Cythnus (fl. 4th century BC), famous Greek painter.

that Timanthes had not dared attempt to express a father's compassion for the young victim. Quintilian spoke of this masterstroke in the same terms as Pliny, and several ancient writers followed Quintilian: *ut fecit Timanthes … nam cum in Iphigeniae immolatione pinxisset tristem Calchantem, tristiorem Ulixem, addidisset Menelao, quem summum poterat ars efficere, maerorem: consumptis adfectibus, non reperiens, quo digne modo patris vultum posset exprimere, velavit eius caput et suo cuique animo dedit aestimandum* [*Instit*. Bk. 1. p. 14].[48] Quintilian proposes this as a model for orators.

Lucian describes [*In Herod*][49] with admiration a large composition representing the marriage of Alexander and Roxanne. True, this picture must have surpassed, in grace of invention and in elegance of allegories, the most radiant of Albani's[50] contributions to the genre of *galant* compositions. Roxanne was reclining on a bed.[51] The beauty of this young woman, increased by the modesty that made her avert her eyes at the approach of Alexander, attracts the initial attention of the spectator. She is easily recognized as the central figure of the picture. Putti were eager to attend her. Some were taking her shoes and another removed her clothes. One putto lifted her veil, so that her lover could see her better. And with a smile that he directs to Alexander, he congratulated him on the charms of his mistress. Other putti took Alexander by his coat of arms, and pulled him towards Roxanne in the posture of a man who would put his diadem at the feet of the object of his passion. Hephaestion,[52] a confidential party to the love affair, had had the goal of making a legitimate union between Alexander and Roxanne. He leant on Hymen,[53] to indicate the services he had

48 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.13.13–14: "This is what Timanthes of Cythnus did … Having depicted, in his Sacrifice of Iphigenia, Calchas sad, Ulysses even sadder, and given Menelaus the most complete expression of grief that his art could produce, he found he had used up all his means of representing emotion and could discover no way of adequately portraying her father's face; so he covered his head in a veil, and left it to the imagination of the spectators." Citation corrected.

49 *Herodotus and Aëtion*, by Lucian of Samosata (ca. 125–after 180), a Greek-speaking satirist likely born in what is now Syria, noted for his wit.

50 Francesco Albani or Albano (1578–1660), Italian baroque painter. Albani painted many mythological works and was known for works with an amatory theme, such as his *Sleeping Venus*.

51 The painting is *Wedding of Alexander and Roxanne* by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (1477–1549), Italian Renaissance painter known typically as 'Il Sodoma.' The painting is currently in the Villa Farnese.

52 Hephaestion (ca. 356–324 BC), Macedonia military leader; second in command and loyal friend to Alexander the Great.

53 An ancient Greek god of marriage.

rendered to his master. The enigma [of this picture] was not very difficult to interpret and one would wish that modern painters had never invented more obscure allegories. Some of the putti carry the lance of Alexander, and they seem to bend under a burden too heavy for them. Others play with his shield. They have made the putto who has shot the dart [that made Alexander fall in love] sit atop the shield and they carry him in triumph. Another putto was hidden in Alexander's breastplate to scare them and waited for them to approach. This hidden putto may well resemble some other mistress of Alexander, or perhaps one of the ministers of this prince who had wanted to block the marriage to Roxanne. A poet would say that the god of marriage was obliged to reward the painter who had so graciously celebrated one of his triumphs. This ingenious artist displayed his picture during the solemnities of the Olympic games. Pronexides gave his daughter in marriage to the painter. Pronexides must have been a man of great importance, since he was responsible for administration of the festival. Raphael has not distained to draw the subject described by Lucian. His design has been engraved by one of the disciples of the famous Marco Antonio.[54]

The inspired author [Lucian in his *Zeuxis*],[55] from whom I have borrowed this account, praised even more enthusiastically the artistic composition of a picture by Zeuxis. This represents the family of a centaur. But it is unnecessary to cite any more from ancient writers. Who can doubt, after having seen the expressiveness of the figures of the *Laocoön* group, that the ancients excelled in the art that can give a soul to marble and bronze and which lends speech to colours. No lover of the fine arts has not seen, at least, a copy of the *Dying Gladiator*.[56] (This was formerly in the Ludovisi Palazzo Grande and is now on display at the Palazzo Chigi.) This unfortunate man, mortally wounded by a sword thrust through his body, is sitting on the ground and still has the strength to support himself on his right arm. Although he will soon die, he does not want to give in to his pain or allow himself to faint. He composes his features, as gladiators prided themselves on doing at the moment of death. He does not fear death; he would fear to wince. *Quis mediocris Gladiator ingemuit, quis vultum mutavit umquam? quis non modo stetit, verum etiam decubuit turpiter*? [Cicer.

54 Probably Marco Antonio Bassetti (1586–1630), Italian painter.

55 Lucian's work, *Zeuxis and Antiochus* contains a detailed description of a centaur family.

56 *The Dying Gaul* (formerly known as *The Dying Gladiator*) is a Roman copy of a lost Hellenistic statue. The original was probably sculpted in about 225 BC. It was probably excavated in the early 17th century and is now in the Capitoline Museums.

Tuscul. Qu. Bk. 10][57] said Cicero, in the place where he tells us a lot of wonderful things about the fortitude of these unfortunate men. But to return to *The Dying Gladiator*: it is a dying man who has just received the fatal stroke. We feel that, despite the strength that remains to him, he has only a moment to live. We look at him for a long time, waiting to see him fall dead.

Who does not know about the famous group representing a famous event in Roman history: the adventure of young Papirius? [Aul. Gell. Bk. 1. ch. 2].[58] This is still in the Ludovisi Palazzo Grande. Everyone knows that this child remained with his father while the Senate met. His mother asked him several questions about the outcome [of the Senate's deliberations], in order to know what had been said. This was something that she could not hope to learn from her husband, since the Romans were still not very courteous [to their wives]. The mother could only get one answer from her son, which did not allow her to doubt that he was avoiding the question. The Senate, he repeatedly answered, had considered whether each husband should have two wives or whether each wife should have two husbands.[59] This incident has given rise to the Latin proverb, *curiae capax praetexta*,[60] which is used in speaking of a child who has a lot more discretion than is normal for his age.

No sentiment was ever better expressed than the curiosity of the mother of young Papirius. The soul of this woman appears to be entirely in her eyes, which pierce her son as she caresses him. The positions of all parts of her body are in accord with her eyes and let us know what she is trying to do. With one hand, she caresses her son; the other hand is drawn back. It is a natural movement of people who want to repress an impatience that is ready to explode. The young Papirius responds to his mother with apparent complaisance, but it is obvious that this complaisance is only affected. His look is naïve, and his posture is ingenuous. Nevertheless, we see from his knowing smile, half-formed because

57 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.17: "What gladiator of ordinary merit has ever uttered a groan or changed countenance? Who of them has disgraced himself, I will not say upon his feet, but who has disgraced himself in his fall?"

58 Aulus Gellius (AD125–180), Roman writer educated at Athens. He is known today for his only surviving work, *Attic Nights*. This is a commonplace book in which he collected anything interesting or unusual that he came across.

59 Du Bos's telling of this story is quoted in the article on the Papirius in Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [Encyclopedia, or reasoned dictionary of sciences, arts, and trades].

60 "A *toga praetexta* fit for the curia." The *toga praetexta* was a purple fringed toga worn by higher magistrates and children before assuming the toga of manhood (*toga virilis*). The Curia was where the Roman Senate met.

respect constrains him, and the embarrassed look in his eyes, that this child wants to appear honest, but he is not sincere. We see that he promises to speak the truth and we simultaneously see that he does not. Four or five touches that the sculptor has added to his face, something ineffable in the movement of his hands, belie the naivety and sincerity that otherwise appear in his posture, and on his face.

The same praise can be given to the statue usually called the *Rotator* or the *Blade-Sharpener*. This was excavated in Rome and taken to Florence forty years ago, where it can be seen in the study of the Duke [of Tuscany]. This figure represents the slave who, according to Livy, accidentally heard the plan, made by the sons of Brutus, to re-establish the Tarquins in Rome [Bk. 2, ch. 4].[61] The slave saved the Republic by revealing the conspiracy to the consul.

> *Prodita laxabant portarum claustra tyrannis*
> *exulibus iuvenes ipsius consulis et quos …*
> *occulta ad patres produxit crimina servus*
> *matronis lugendus*.
> [Juvenal, *Sat*. 8][62]

This crouching slave is shown in the position suitable for sharpening the knife that he holds and appears to be completely preoccupied by his task. The least attentive people notice, upon seeing the statue of which I speak, that he is nevertheless distracted, and that he gives his attention, not to what he seems to do, but to what he hears. This distraction is apparent from his entire body, but mainly from his hands and head. His fingers are in the right position to push the knife on the stone to sharpen it, but their action is suspended. In a gesture natural to those who listen while afraid that they will be seen to lend an ear to what they hear, our slave raises his eyes enough to see his object without raising his head, as he would naturally lift it, were he under no constraints.

---

61 Livy, *History of Rome* 2.4: "When the guilty had suffered, that the example might be in both respects a notable deterrent from crime, the informer was rewarded with money from the treasury, emancipation, and citizenship. He is said to have been the first to be freed by the vindicta. Some think that even the word *vindicta* was derived from his name, which they suppose to have been Vindicius." Modern scholars believe that this interpretation of the *Blade-Sharpener* is completely wrong. See note above.

62 Juvenal, *Satires* 8.261–262; 266–267: "The traitors who were planning to undo the bolts of the gates to the exiled tyrants were the sons of the consul himself … It was a slave who revealed the secret plot to the senators, and for this he deserved to be mourned by the Roman matrons."

The ability to design provides a great deal of assistance when it comes to expression. The *Statue of Antinous*,[63] the *Venus de' Medici*[64] and several other monuments of antiquity are sufficient to convince us that the ancients were, at least, as good as us in designing elegantly and correctly. Their painters had even more opportunity than ours can have to study the nude body. Moreover, the exercises then used to relax and strengthen bodies, put them in better shape than they are today. Rubens, in a little Latin treatise[65] that he has written on the use that painters must make of antique statues, does not doubt that the exercises in use among the ancients gave bodies a perfection that they scarcely ever attain today.

Time has faded the colours and blurred the shading in the remaining fragments of paintings made by brush. Consequently, we cannot judge the extent to which the painters of antiquity excelled in colouration nor whether they equalled or surpassed the great masters of the Lombard School in this lovely aspect of painting. There is more. We do not know whether the *Marriage* of the Villa Aldobrandini, and other fragments, were made by a great colourist or a mediocre craftsman of the time. We can only say for certain that the execution is very bold. These pieces appear to be the work of artists who have mastered their brushes to the extent that Rubens and Paolo Veronese have. The strokes of the Aldobrandini *Marriage* appear rather crude when viewed from up close, but they have a marvellous effect when the picture is viewed from a distance of twenty steps. Apparently this was the distance from which it was seen on the wall where the painter had made it.

It seems that the accounts of Pliny and many other ancient authors should convince us that the Greeks and Romans excelled in colouration. But before we let ourselves be persuaded, it is necessary to reflect that people usually speak of colours in relation to what they could have seen. The colourist who

63 Antinous (ca. 111–130) was a Greek lover or companion of the Emperor Hadrian. After his death, Antinous was deified and many statues of him survive. Du Bos may refer to the statue of Antinous as Dionysus-Osiris, now in the Vatican Museum.

64 Made in the 1st century BC, this Hellenistic sculpture is a copy of an earlier (perhaps 4th century) bronze sculpture. It is regarded as one of the great pieces of sculpture from the ancient world. Its discovery is undocumented, but it is known to have been in the Medici collection by 1638.

65 After Rubens' death, a book was found among his papers. It contains remarks on various technical aspects of painting, including perspective and anatomy. Du Bos probably refers to the French translation, *Théorie de la figure humaine, &c., ouvrage traduit du Latin de P.P. Rubens, avec XLIV. planches d'après les desseins de ce célèbre artiste* [Theory of the human figure, etc., a work translated from Latin by P.P. Rubens, with forty-four plates following the drawings of the famous artist] (Paris: 1703–1704).

is more successful than all those who have survived until the time of some historian, who speaks of the state of painting in his day, will be cited by this historian as the greatest possible colourist and as a man of whom even nature is jealous. But subsequently someone does better than anyone had ever done. The former divine colourist, so praised by writers, becomes an ordinary artist in comparison to the new ones. We cannot decide our question on the basis of history. In order to judge, we need pieces to compare. And we lack them.

We should not be prejudiced against the colouration of the ancients on the grounds that they were ignorant of the invention of mixing colours with oil. This was discovered scarcely three hundred years ago in Flanders. A painter can colour very well while painting frescos. The mass of Pope Julius,[66] a work by Raphael whose colours we have already praised, is painted alfresco in the Room of the Signatura in the Vatican.

Pliny and other ancient writers speak very explicitly of *chiaroscuro* and the enchanting arrangement of light and shade and their accounts are well supported by examples and very plausible. Consequently, we cannot deny that the ancients at least equalled the greatest modern painters in this part of the art. Passages from these authors that we did not understand, when modern painters where still ignorant of the miracles we can make with the aid of this magic, are no longer so tangled and difficult. Rubens, his students, and Polidoro da Caravaggio,[67] have explained these passages, brushes in hand, much better than the most erudite commentators could have done in books.

As a result of this discussion, it appears to me that the ancients had pushed design, *chiaroscuro*, expression, and artistic composition at least as far as the most capable moderns have done. Moreover, it appears to me that we cannot judge their colouration. On the basis of their works, supposing that we have the best, we can be fairly confident that the ancients were not as successful in pictorial composition as Raphael, Rubens, Paolo Veronese, and some other modern painters.

The reader will remember what gave rise to this digression on the ancients' capacity in the art of painting. After having spoken of the advantages that Latin poets have over French poets, I have proposed that painters of previous eras have not had the same advantage over the painters who work today. This made it necessary for me to give reasons for not including Greek and ancient Roman

66 *The Mass at Bolsena* (1512–1514). The picture depicts a miracle from 1263. According to the story, a priest who doubted the doctrine of transubstantiation was performing mass when the bread of the host started bleeding.

67 Polidoro da Caravaggio (1495–1543), Italian renaissance painter and a student of Raphael.

painters in my proposal [that the ancients surpassed the moderns]. Thus, I return [to the point of digression] and say that the painters who have worked since the renaissance of the arts, such as Raphael and his contemporaries, have no advantage over our artists. The latter know all the secrets, they know all the colours, that the former have used.

CHAPTER 39

The Sense in which Nature Is Enriched Since Raphael.

On the contrary, painters who work today draw more assistance from art than did Raphael and his contemporaries. Since Raphael, art and nature have been perfected. If Raphael returned to the world with his talents, he would do even better than he did in the time in which destiny placed him. On the other hand, Virgil could not have written a French epic poem as well as he wrote one in Latin. The Lombard school has perfected colouration to a degree not attained during the lifetime of Raphael. Since his time, the Antwerp school has made several discoveries concerning the magic of *chiaroscuro*. Michelangelo da Caravaggio and his followers have made, in this part of painting, excellent discoveries, though they can be reproached with having been too much in love with them. Finally, since Raphael, nature is embellished. Let us explain this paradox.

Our painters currently know a variety of trees and animals that are more beautiful and perfect than those that were known to Raphael's predecessors and to Raphael himself. I will content myself with presenting three examples: The trees of the Low Countries, the animals of England and some other countries, and, finally, the flowers and trees of the East and West Indies.

Raphael and his contemporaries lived at a time when East Asia and America were still undiscovered by painters. A country is undiscovered by the members of a certain profession, they cannot profit from the country's riches that are useful to them, until after some of their profession have travelled there. Brazil, for example, was discovered by merchants a long time before physicians discovered it. Only after Piso[1] and other capable physicians visited Brazil did European physicians know well its simple substances and trees. Similarly, spice dealers and jewellers had already discovered East Asia and America in Raphael's time. But only after him did painters discover these parts of the world, when drawings of the rare plants, fruits, and animals found there were imported. These could be used to embellish paintings.

The temperature of the climate and the nature of the sun in the Low Countries make the trees grow closer to one another—straighter, higher, and with

1 Willem Piso (1611–1678), Dutch physician. He travelled to Dutch Brazil (1637–1644) and was a founder of tropical medicine.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_043

thicker leaves than the same types of trees in Greece, Italy, and many French provinces. The leaves on the trees in the Low Countries are not only more lush, they are also greener and larger. For this reason, hills in the Low Countries give the impression of a landscape that is greener, fresher, and more pleasing than hillsides in Italy.

The bodies of cows, bulls, lambs, and also pigs are better developed in England than they are in Italy and Greece. Before Raphael, Venetian merchants often visited English ports. English pilgrims often went to Rome to earn a living, but none of them were painters, and to the extent that they were able to describe the animals from their own country, it was not by means of a drawing.

True, Raphael and his contemporaries did not only study nature from nature itself. They also studied it in the works of the ancients. But the ancients were not acquainted with the trees and animals of which we speak. The idea of 'beautiful nature' that the ancients formed of certain trees and animals, using as models the trees and animals of Greece and Italy, came nowhere near the idea of nature produced in Raphael's oeuvre, I claim. Why did the beautiful horses of antiquity, those on which Marcus Aurelius[2] rode, and to which Pietro da Cortona[3] referred in a speech every time he passed through the centre of the capital, saying with quaint enthusiasm, "Advance! Do you not see that you are living?", have neither proportions as elegant, nor a body and manner as noble as those of the sculptors familiar with northern English horses? That species of animal has been improved in various countries by mixing breeds, which advanced nations know how to do.

The *Horse Tamers of Montecavallo*[4] is pitied by everyone who is familiar with horses from England and Andalusia because of the deformed proportions of the different parts of their bodies, and mainly because of their enormous necks.

---

2 Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–180), Roman Emperor who followed a Romanized version of Stoicism. His *Meditations*, written while he was in the midst of a military campaign, is one of the few surviving complete works of Stoic philosophy. Stoicism was a dominant philosophical sect during the Hellenic period, and Marcus Aurelius urged its primary message: to seek happiness (*eudaimonia*) or tranquility by following a lifestyle that tracked the natural world as a guide.

3 Pietro de Cortona (1596–1669), important Italian painter of the baroque period, was better known as part of the baroque architectural movement as an interior designer. Connected to the Medici family in Florence, Cortona painted beautiful frescoes.

4 Du Bos refers to the marble statues at Monte Cavallo in Rome, known as the *Dioscuri*. These statues, which are 2nd century Roman creations that are modeled on 5th century BC Greek prototypes, depict two men, Castor and Pollux, both naked, attempting to control two horses. Inscribed on one man is "*Opus Fidiae*" (the work of Phidias), and on the other "*Opus Praxitelis*" (the work of Praxiteles). Phidias (ca. 480–ca. 430) and Praxiteles (fl. fourth century BC), famous Greek sculptors.

The inscription made under these horses, one of which assures us that it is a work by Phidias, the other by Praxiteles, is a fake. I completely agree. But it must have been the case that the ancients thought very highly of it, ever since Constantine had them moved from Alexandria to Rome as a precious monument with which he intended to adorn his bathhouses. Myron's cow,[5] that famous heifer, which herdsmen mistook for one of their own livestock and which they made their own cattle graze around, could not approach, based on appearances, any of the two thousand cattle which are today in the countryside in England, since it was so similar to its models [i.e., the inferior Greek cattle stock]. Clearly the bulls, cows, and pigs on ancient *bas-reliefs* are nothing in comparison to animals of the same species in England. We see a beauty in those English animals that the ancient artists who, not having seen them, could not achieve.

We need to see the world almost as well as the intelligent being who created it, and who determined its arrangement, in order to imagine the perfection which nature is capable of achieving due to the combination of possibilities favourable to its products, and the circumstances fortunate for its nurture. Human understanding of the creation of the universe, limited as it is, cannot lend beauty to nature. It cannot dignify by its inventions what it is only capable of improving by lucky guesses. Rather than perfecting nature, human imagination often ruins it. Until humans discover unknown countries, and travellers can export new treasures from them, it will be true to say that nature, as treated in the portfolios of painters and sculptors, will always be in a process of being improved.

5 Myron of Eleutherae (ca. 480 BC), an ancient Beoetian sculptor. The cow, or heifer, to which Du Bos refers, now long gone, was originally described by Cicero and has been a source of curiosity for hundreds of years. Those who admired the cow, which was made of bronze, used it to hang epigrams written about the cow. There is continued debate about the aesthetic merits of the epigrams and what they reveal about Myron's cow. See Michael Squire, "Making Myron's Cow Moo? Exphrastic epigram and the poetics of simulation," *Journal of American Philology* 131.4 (2010), 589–634.

CHAPTER 40

Whether the Power Painting Has over People Is Greater Than the Power of Poetry.

I believe that painting has a greater power over people than poetry does and I base my opinion on two reasons. The first is that painting stirs us by means of the sense of sight. The second is that painting does not employ only artificial signs, as the poet does. Rather, it uses natural signs. Painting imitates by means of natural signs.

The painter uses the eye to move us. As Horace said,

> *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,*
> *Quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus*.[1]

Sight has a greater authority over the soul than the other senses. Instinct, reinforced by experience, gives the soul more trust in sight than in the other senses. The soul checks the reports of other senses against the sense of sight when the soul suspects that these reports are inaccurate. Thus noises and even natural sounds do not affect us to the degree that visible objects do. For example, the cries of a wounded man, that we do not see, do not affect us as much as the sight of his blood and wounds, even though we are aware of the source of the cries that we hear. We can say, metaphorically speaking, that the eye is closer to the soul than the ear.

Secondly, the signs that painting employs to speak to us are not arbitrary and conventional signs, as the words that poetry uses are. Painting employs natural signs whose energy does not depend on education. These signs draw their significance from the relation that nature itself has taken care to establish between external objects and our organs, in order to promote our survival. Perhaps I speak wrongly when I say that painting employs signs. Perhaps, it puts nature itself before our eyes. If our mind is not deceived, at least our senses are taken in. The shape of objects, their colour, reflection of light, shadows, in short, all that the eye can perceive is found in a picture as we see it in nature. It appears in a picture in the same way that we see it in reality. It even seems that

1 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 180–181: "Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_044

the eye, dazzled by the work of a great painter, sometimes believes that it sees movement in its figures.

The most touching poem could only move us by degree, by putting in play several gears of our mechanism, one after the other. The words must first wake the ideas of which they are only arbitrary signs. These ideas must then be arranged in the imagination. There they form touching pictures and the paintings that engage us. True, these operations are soon completed. But it is an incontestable principle of mechanics that a multiplicity of gears always weakens the force since a gear never communicates all of the force that it has received. Moreover, one of these operations (the word awakening the idea of which it is a sign) does not happen by means of a natural law. It is partly artificial.

Thus, the objects that pictures present to us act qua natural signs and must act more promptly. The impression that they make on us must be stronger and more sustained than those that poems can make. We read in Horace the description of the cupid who sharpens his flaming arrows on a rock drenched in blood. These words, which the poet uses to create his painting, awaken in us ideas of all of these things and these ideas then form in our imagination the picture in which we see the cupid get on with this work. This image touches us, but when it is represented in a picture, it touches us even more. We then see in an instant what the verse had only made us imagine, and even that after several moments. Thus the painting contained in this verse,

> … *ferus et Cupido*
> *semper ardentes acuens sagittas*
> *Cote cruenta.*
> [Bk. 2, *Od.* 8][2]

appears, in some fashion, to be a new image to those who see it in a picture at Chantilly. It had not struck them as it strikes them then. The painter uses this image as the basis of a picture, in which the principal figure is a portrait of a princess sprung from the royal blood of France. (This princess is today internationally more illustrious for her beauty than for her status and birth. In the future she must be even more famous.) In this picture some putti turn a sharpening stone. Another putto has cut his arm and his blood sprays on this stone, on which Cupid sharpens arrows from which sparks fly.[3]

---

2 Horace, *Odes* 2.8.14–16: "and savage Cupid who is forever sharpening his burning arrows on a bloody whetstone."

3 This is almost certainly a painting described in *Voyage Pittoresque de la France avec la descrip-*

In short, no one has lacked the opportunity to remark several times in his life how much easier it is to make people grasp, by means of the eyes than by the ears, everything that one wants them to understand or imagine. A drawing representing the elevation of a palace makes us conceive in an instant the effect of its scale. Its blueprint makes us comprehend in a moment the arrangement of its rooms. An hour-long systematic exposition, paying the subject all due attention, would not make us understand it as well as we conceive it, so to speak, after a glance. The clearest sentences are poor substitutes for drawings. Rarely does the idea, formed by the imagination, of a building, even on the basis of reports by professional architects, accurately describe the building. When we subsequently see the building we often recognise that we have designed a figment of our imagination. The same is true of a fortress, an army's encampment, a novel plant, an extraordinary animal, a machine, in short, all objects that can engage our curiosity. Diagrams are necessary to make us securely and distinctly understand the most systematic books about these sorts of things. The soberest imagination often forges illusions when it tries to turn these descriptions into pictures. This is especially so when the person who imagines has never seen things similar to those of which he reads or hears described. I am certain, for example, that a soldier can, on the basis of a description, form an image of some attack or of some encampment. However, a person who has never seen attacks or encampments cannot form an accurate image on the basis of some account. Only accounts of things that we have seen enable us clearly to imagine things that are described.

Vitruvius could not have written his book on architecture so systatically and ably as he did, had he not at the same time written with all the clarity that the subject allows. However, since the diagrams that accompanied Vitruvius's explanations are lost, most of these explanations appear obscure today. Thus,

---

tion de toutes ses provinces. Description de la province de l'Isle de France [Pictorial Voyage of France with a Description of all its Provinces. Description of the Provinces of the Isle of France] (Paris: 1789). According to this source (52), the antechamber of the *Appartement du Roi* contained "an allegorical painting in which a Princess of the House of Condé appears as Diana, receiving the arrows of her cupids." The suggestion that Diana is represented is a mistake. Venus (Aphrodite), not Diana, is the goddess of love. See also, *Promenades ou itinéraire des Jardins de Chantilly* [Guided Walks of the Chantilly Gardens] (Paris: 1791), 17. This source confirms at the same location a painting in which "*la femme du grand Condé*" appears as Diana [*sic*] with her cupids. The painting was still at Chantilly in February 1793. (Chantilly, Archives du musée Condé, MS. 1483, copie de l'inventaire conservé aux Archives Départementales de l'Oise, fol. 140r.). It was judged not to be of high quality and could have been sold or burned. The identities of the sitter and painter are unknown. Thank you to Mme. Nicole Garnier, Conservateur général du Patrimoine chargée du musée Condé for this information. Email correspondence, 23 August 2017.

scholars debate the meaning of a large number of passages from Vitruvius. But they agree that his text would be clear if we had the diagrams. Four lines drawn on paper would clear up what entire volumes of commentary cannot. The most expert anatomists agree that they would hardly understand the report of a new discovery if a diagram were not added to this report. One of the most common Italian proverbs says that every conception depends on a picture or a figure.

The ancients held that their divinities had been better served by painters and sculptors than by poets. They believed that pictures and statues convinced people to venerate their gods. They did so by making people pay attention to the marvels that poets recounted about these gods. The statue of Olympian Jupiter made more credible the story that he was the cause of thunder.

> *Si Venerem Cous nusquam posuisset Apelles,*
> *Mersa sub aequoreis illa lateret aquis.*
> [Ovid, *Of Art. Am.* Bk. 3][4]

When the body of Julius Caesar was cremated, no one in Rome could relate the circumstances of his assassination and clarify the facts. We cannot believe that any inhabitant of Rome was ignorant of the number of times that Caesar had been stabbed. However, the people were content with crying. But all of these people were seized with terror when the bloody robe in which Caesar had been killed was spread before them. It seemed, said Quintilian, speaking of the power of the eye over our soul, that Caesar was actually assassinated in front of the people. *Sciebatur interfectum eum*[...]*vestis tamen illa sanguine madens ita repraesentavit imaginem sceleris, ut non occisus esse Caesar sed tum maxime occidi videretur* [*Inst.* Bk. 6, ch. 2].[5]

In Roman times, those who were ruined carried, while asking for alms, a picture in which their misfortunes were depicted. The picture was an object more capable of arousing compassion, and exciting charity, than the most pathetic descriptions that they could give of their troubles. We can refer [questions about] the most proper ways, and the most efficacious means, of softening the human heart to the wisdom and experience of people whose subsistence depends on the alms of their fellow citizens.

---

4 Ovid, *The Art of Love* 3.401–402:
> If Coan Apelles had never painted Venus,
> She would still be lying hidden in the sea's depths.

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.1.31: "It was known that he had been killed ... but it was the clothing, wet with blood, that made the image of the crime so vivid that Caesar seemed not to have been murdered, but to be being murdered there and then."

One might object to my opinion that one would conclude that poems touch us more than pictures: only rarely will a picture cause tears, but tragedies often have this effect, even when they are not masterpieces.

I have two responses to this objection. The first is that it is not conclusive evidence in favour of poetry. The effect of a tragedy performed in the theatre affects us with the assistance of the eyes. A tragedy is [also] assisted by artificial means, whose power we shall soon reveal. In particular, reading tragedies seldom makes us cry, especially those we read without having previously seen them performed. I can easily conceive that a particular reading that is incapable, by itself, of making an impression that brings someone to tears, can renew an impression that was made in the past. This is why, in my view, those who have only read a tragedy and those who have heard it performed in the theatre sometimes have opposing sentiments when they judge the tragedy.

In the second place, I respond that a tragedy contains an infinity of pictures. The painter who depicts the sacrifice of Iphigenia only represents on canvas an instant of the action. Racine's tragedy puts before our eyes several moments of this action and these various incidents make each other more affecting. The poet successively presents to us, so to speak, fifty pictures that lead us, by degrees, to the extreme emotion that makes our tears flow. Thus, forty scenes of a tragedy must touch us more than a single scene depicted in a picture could. A picture only represents an instant of a scene. So, an entire poem moves us more than a picture, although a picture moves us more than a scene representing the same event, if this scene were to be detached from the others and read without us ever having seen what goes before it.

Thus, a picture allows only one attack on our soul, while a poem attacks it for a long time, always with new weapons. A poem shakes the soul for a long time before arousing the emotion that makes us cry. Racine, in order to make us shudder with horror when Iphigenia is conducted to the fatal altar, depicts her as virtuous, amiable, and dear to a lover whom she loves. This poet makes us pass through various degrees of emotion. In order to make us more sensitive to the troubles of the victim, he even lets us imagine for a time that she has escaped the sacrificial knife.

A painter who represents the instant when the sacred knife is about to slit Iphigenia's throat does not have the advantage of displaying his picture to spectators as well prepared, full of sympathy, and recent sympathy, for this princess. At most he can make us interested in her, but he could not make her as dear to us as the poet can. The greatness of soul, and all of the elevated sentiments of a good nature, that the poet can give to the tragic character Iphigenia, affect us much more than the exterior qualities that a painter can give the person in a

painting who cannot affect us by speaking. This is why we are more moved by a poem than by a picture, although painting has more sway over us than does poetry.

The type of parallel that I have just drawn is not as erudite as the comparison of painting and poetry found in the learned book of Junius the Younger on the painting of the ancients. However, I imagine that my reflections are more to the point than the erudition of this author [Junius, *De pict. vet.* bk 4, ch. 1].[6]

Human ingenuity has found several means of making pictures even more capable of making a big impression on us. They are varnished. They are put in gilded frames that cast a new lustre on the colours. These frames seem, in dividing pictures from neighbouring objects, to unite better the parts of which the pictures are composed, just as a window appears to unify the various objects that are viewed through it. Finally, some of the most modern painters think fit to place, in compositions intended to be viewed from a distance, figures in relief that are part of the composition and coloured just like the figures among which they are placed. Supposedly, the eye sees more distinctly the parts in relief that protrude from the picture. The eye is then more easily seduced by the really flat painted parts and these parts more easily delude the eyes. But those who have seen the vault with annunciation in Genoa[7] and that of the Church of the Jesus at Rome,[8] in which relief figures are included in the composition, do not find that the effect is particularly marvellous.

The ingenuity of people has served poetry better than it has served painting. It has discovered three manners of giving poetry a new power to please and touch us. These three manners are simple recitation, recitation accompanied by bodily movement, which we call declamation, and song.

6 Junius, *On the Painting of the Ancients* 4. 1. Franciscus Junius the Younger, also known as François du Jon (1591–1677), pioneering philologist and collector of ancient manuscripts. He was born in Heidelberg but lived much of his life in the Netherlands and England (where he was associated with John Milton). Junius was also the author of *De pictura veterum* (1637), translated as *On the Painting of the Ancients* (1638).

7 Du Bos refers to the vault in the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata del Vastato, the cathedral in Genoa. The central crossing of the nave has a vaulted dome painted with an Assumption fresco by Giovanni Andrea Ansaldo (1584–1638). This assumption is considered Ansaldo's masterpiece.

8 The Church of the Gèsu or, more correctly, Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù all'Argentina, is the home church of the Jesuits. Du Bos may refer to the decoration of the ceiling of the St. Francis Xavier Chapel, in the right transept. It features the *Death of Francis Xavier* by Pietro da Cortona painted in relief.

CHAPTER 41

On Simple Recitation and Oratory.

The first poets saw that recitation gives a power to poems that they do not have when read silently off the written page. Thus, they preferred to recite their own verses than to let them be read. Reciting harmonious verses pleases the ear and heightens the pleasure contained in the meanings of the verses. By contrast, the very action of reading is in some ways arduous. It is a skill that the eye has to learn to do by the help of art, and which is not accompanied by the pleasant sensation we have when we fix our eyes on objects depicted in paintings.

Since words are arbitrary signs of our ideas, the different characters that make up writing are similarly arbitrary signs of the sounds of which the words are composed.[1] When we read poetry, the written characters necessarily give rise to the idea of sounds, which turn out to be arbitrary signs. And, necessarily then, the sounds of the words, which are simply arbitrary signs, give rise to ideas that are attached to those words. These operations occur quickly and with a certain ease, and they happen immediately as a single operation. This is what happens in recitation, where the word that we hear immediately gives rise to the idea that is attached to that spoken word.

I am not unaware that a beautiful printed edition, with its words written in gorgeous height and blackness, organized by a good eye in elegant proportion on the page, makes for a pleasant visual sensation. Depending on one's taste for the art of printing, this greater or lesser pleasure is incomplete, and has nothing to do with the emotion caused by reading the poem. It comes to an end as soon as we turn our attention to reading, and we no longer perceive the beauty of the visual impression, except for the ease our eyes find in recognizing the letters and arranging the words. Compare Elzevier's[2] edition of Virgil as a masterpiece of printing to reading Virgil's poetry to feel its charms: these are two

1 Du Bos follows the Aristotelian lesson that spoken words are arbitrary signs of our ideas, and that written words are arbitrary signs of our spoken words. See Aristotle's *On Interpretation* 1.16a3–9. Likely the immediate inspiration for this passage is Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book 3.

2 Elzevier was a Dutch publishing house, founded by Lodewijk Elzevier (1542–1617) in Leiden. The modern-day publishing giant Elsevier, which was originally established in 1880, borrowed the famed name of this earlier printer, but the two companies had no actual formal connection. During its heyday, Elzevier published attractive books with beautiful typeface and a distinctive small size. The corpus of Virgil's poetry, *Virgilii opera*, was published in 1636.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_045

very distinct and different activities. Here we are talking about the latter, which is not a pleasure in itself.

It is such a slight pleasure; it makes us feel so little, and the harmony of the poem does not move us so that we are brought by instinct to speak aloud the verses that we have only read to ourselves, though it seems to us that they *should* be metrical and harmonious. It is one of those judgments that the mind makes by an unpremeditated operation, and that we recognize only upon reflection, that makes us turn back, so to speak, over what has passed through our minds [when reading to ourselves silently]. Such are most of the mental operations about which we have spoken, and the majority of which we should say more.

Thus reciting poetic verse is a pleasure for our ears, even though reading it is hard work for our eyes. In hearing verses recited, we are freed from the pain of reading them, and we feel their cadence and harmony. The listener is more indulgent than the reader because he is more gratified by the verses that he hears than the former by verses he reads. Do we not recognize the pleasure that hearing the recitation imposes on our judgement such that we hold back on evaluating the merit of a poem, so pleasing in its recitation, until we can cast our own eyes, as they say, on the paper on which it is written? It is said that one must never compromise one's judgement, yet often recitation imposes a judgement on us. The sense that we get from our own experience teaches us, therefore, that the eye is a more severe critic and a more subtle scrutinizer than the ear. This is because the eye, unlike the ear, is not in this circumstance vulnerable to being seduced by its pleasure. The more a work is pleasing, the less we are in a condition to recognize and take stock of its faults. But the work that we hear recited to us is more pleasing than the work that we read [silently] at our desks.

In addition, we see that all poets, either by instinct or by being aware of what matters to them, rather prefer to recite their verses than to let them be read, even by the first trusted readers of their works. They are right to do so, if they are looking for praise, rather than useful advice.

Ancient poets published by means of recitation their works that were not written for the theatre. We see from Juvenal's *Satires* [*Saty. Prim. & Sept.*][3] that many gatherings assembled in Rome to hear recitations of poems that their authors wanted to make public. From that period, we find an even stronger

3 Juvenal, *Satire* 7.3–6: "This is a time when distinguished and well-known poets have already been applying for the lease on a bathhouse at Gabii or a bakehouse at Rome, when others haven't considered it horrid or disgraceful to become public announcers."

proof of the pleasure given by the simple recitation of poetic verses that are rich in harmony. During their meals, Romans, who often added various pleasures to the pleasure of dining, read aloud Homer, Virgil, and other excellent poets, even though most of the guests knew by heart part of the poems that they were made to hear. But the Romans reckoned that the pleasure of the rhythm and harmony must compensate for the poem's lack of novelty.

Juvenal promised a friend, that he invited to come to dine one evening with him, that he would hear Homer and Virgil read during the meal, just as today we promise to our friends an after-dinner card game. "If my reciter," he said, "is not one of the most able in his profession, the verses that he reads to us are so beautiful that they will not fail to please us."

> *Nostra dabunt alios hodie convivia ludos,*
> *Conditor Iliados cantabitur atque Maronis*
> *Altisoni dubiam facientia carmina palmam;*
> *Quid refert tales versus qua voce legantur?*
> [*Saty*. 14][4]

Since simple recitation adds so much energy to a poem, it is easy to grasp the advantage that pieces declaimed in the theatre draw from being performed. *Scaenici Actores qui et optimis Poetarum tantum adiciunt gratiae, ut nos infinito magis eadem illa audita quam lecta delectent, et vilissimis etiam quibusdam impetrant aures, ut quibus nullus est in bibliothecis locus, sit etiam in theatris* [*Inst. Orat*. Bk. ch. 3].[5] If those who were unimpressed by Terence's poems had seen them performed by ancient actors, who put at least as much vivacity into their acting as Italian actors do, they would change their minds. To return to Quintilian, who would want to place *Les Vendanges de Surêne*[6] into his library, should someone want to make a copy of that comedy, which had to be copied

4 Juvenal, *Satire* 11: "My party today will offer other forms of entertainment. We will have a recitation from the author of the *Iliad* and from the poems of the sublime Maro, which challenge Homer's supremacy. With poetry like this, it hardly matters how it is read." The "sublime Maro" is Virgil.

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.4: "Stage actors add so much charm to the greatest poets that their productions give us infinitely more pleasure when heard than when read, and at the same time they secure an audience even for some of the poorest, so that authors for whom the libraries have no room may often find a place on the stage." Du Bos' quotation corrected.

6 *Les Vendanges de Suresnes* was a French comedy written by Florent Carton Dancourt (1661–1725), who was also an actor, after meeting and marrying the daughter of the actor Francois Lenoir de la Thorilliere. Dancourt's comedies, or properly speaking farces, are not as well thought of as those of his contemporary, Molière.

by hand in those days since the art of printing had not yet been invented? Yet the performance of this farcical piece entertains us.

The set prepares us to be moved, and action of the theatre lends marvellous power to verse. Since bodily eloquence persuades us no less than speech, gestures greatly assist the voice in making its impression. Natural instinct is our guide, teaching us that those who listen to us speak, without seeing us, understand only half [of what we communicate]. Nature has effectively assigned a facial expression and a particular gesture to each passion and each sentiment. *Omnis enim motus animi suum quemdam a natura habet vultum, et sonum, et gestum* [Cicero, II. 3. *Orator*].[7] Each passion has its own particular tone and facial expression.

The chief merit of a declaimer is being himself moved. The inner emotion of what he speaks about throws a pathos into his intonations and gestures that no amount of art and study could add. The actor who appears moved appeals to us. We recoil from those that we recognize to be unmoved. I do not know why, but an icy delivery, forced movements, or an affected countenance always reveal the actor to be lazy. These things reveal him to be a person who is motivated by art alone, and someone who wants to make us cry without himself feeling any affliction. This is an odious person, who is somewhat an impostor.

> *Si vis me flere, dolendum est*
> *Primum ipsi tibi*.[8]

All those who train in one of these arts, the goal of which is to move other people, must learn to be judged following Horace's maxim: to make others cry, one ought to be emotionally afflicted. A passion is badly imitated if it gets only lip service. For expression to be successful, the heart needs to feel at least slightly touched. *Nec agamus rem quasi alienam, sed assumamus parumper illum dolorem* [*Inst. Orat*. Bk. 6. ch. 1].[9]

Therefore, I believe that the genius that shapes excellent declaimers consists in having a sensitive heart, which makes them enter into their character's feelings automatically, but with feeling. It consists in an automatic disposition to be prepared for all passions they want to express. Quintilian believed that his job was to teach the art of eloquence. This obliged him to study the movements

---

7 Cicero, *Orator* 3.57.216: "For nature has assigned to every emotion a particular look and tone of voice and bearing of its own."

8 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 102: "If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself."

9 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.2.34: "let us not plead the case as though it were someone else's, but take the pain of it on ourselves for the moment."

of the human heart, at least as much as grammatical rules. He says that the most moving orator is one who is even more moved himself. *Imagines rerum … quisquis bene conceperit; is erit in affectibus potentissimus* [Quint. Bk. 6, ch. 1].[10] In speaking elsewhere of the imitation of passions that the orator makes in his oration, or *de affectibus quae effinguntur imitatione*,[11] that it is essential for an orator to enflame his imagination by vividly bringing to mind the objects he intends to use to move others, and to put himself in his character's place. *Primum est bene affici, et concipere imagines rerum, et tanquam veris moveri* [Ibid. Bk. 2. ch. 3].[12]

All orators and actors whom we have seen eminently succeed in their professions were people born with the sensibility of which I have been speaking. Art gave them nothing. Nevertheless, without art, a sonorous voice and all other natural talents could not produce a great orator. At all times we can make the same observation about good actors that Quintilian made about those who performed during his lifetime, namely that when actors have come from playing an engaging part they should have tears in their eyes when leaving the stage. *Vidi ego saepe histriones atque comoedos, cum ex aliquo graviore actu personam deposuissent, flentes adhuc egredi* [Quint. Bk. 11. ch. 3].[13]

Women are more emotionally responsive and have more control over their responses than men. Consequently, put in another way, they have more flexibility in their hearts than men, and they are more successful than men at doing what Quintilian required of all those who wanted to try declaiming. They are moved more easily than men by passions that delight them. In a word, women are better at entering into the feelings of the character they play than men are. Although men may be more capable of a strong performance and drawing attention than women are, due to the education they received which makes them better equipped than women to learn all that art can teach, over the past sixty years we have nevertheless seen a larger number of excellent actresses on

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.2.30: "Whoever best conceives images of things will have the most power in affecting feelings."

11 The translation of Du Bos' phrase is "of affections which are effected by imitation." This appears to be a misquotation from Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.62: "*Contra qui effinguntur imitation, artem habent*" ("Emotions contrived by imitation, on the other hand, involve art").

12 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.62: "so that the first thing for us to do is to be genuinely affected, form a picture of the situation, and let ourselves be moved by it as though it was real."

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.2.35: "I have frequently seen tragic and comic actors, having taken off their masks at the end of some emotional scene, leave the stage still in tears."

the French stage than excellent actors. Ever since the Opera Theatre opened in France, we have seen no men excel in the art of declamation, appropriate for words set to music, better than Mademoiselle Rochois.[14]

14 Marie Le Rochois (ca. 1658–1728) is considered one of the greatest opera singers of this period. She was a favourite of Jean-Baptiste Lully, who created significant roles for her in many of his theatrical pieces.

CHAPTER 42

Of Our Manner of Reciting Tragedy and Comedy.

Since the goal of tragedy is to excite fear and pity, and since the marvellous is part of the essence of this type of poetry, it is necessary to give every possible dignity to the characters who are represented here. This is why today these characters are usually dressed in fanciful attire initially inspired by the military dress of the ancient Romans. This attire is noble in itself and seems to have some share in the glory of the people who wore it. Actresses are dressed in the richest and most majestic attire that the imagination can invent. In contrast, street clothing, that is to say, clothes in common use, are used in playing comedies.

The French do not rely on dress to give tragic actors suitable nobility and dignity. We also want these actors to speak in an elevated tone of voice, a tone more grave and firmer than is used in ordinary conversation. All of the informality permissible in the pronunciation of ordinary conversation is forbidden. True, this manner of reciting is all the more difficult because one must avoid approximating ordinary conversation. But it is also more dignified, and it is even more advantageous for spectators who, by its means, better understand the verse. If it were recited more quickly and in a lower voice, spectators, most of whom are rather distant from the stage, would have too much trouble hearing tragic verse which is in a metaphorical style. This would particularly be the case when spectators are seeing a play for the first time. Part of the verse would escape them and what they lost would often prevent them from being touched by what they heard. It is also necessary that the gestures of tragedians be more measured and noble, their carriage more grave, and their bearing more serious than the gestures, carriage, and bearing of characters in comedy. In short, we expect tragedians to assume an air of grandeur and dignity in all that they do, as we expect the poet who makes them speak to put grandeur and dignity in everything he makes them say.

We see that the general feeling in Europe is that the French best succeed in the presentation of tragedies these days. *Quotiens discessit aemulatio, succedit humanitas* [Quint. Bk. 11. ch. 1].[1] The Italians do us justice, without too much reluctance, when it is a matter of arts and abilities that they do not

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.1.16: "whenever rivalry has vanished, humanity steps in."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_046

pride themselves on excelling in. They say that our tragic declamation gives them an idea of the chant or theatrical declamation of the ancients, which is lost to us. In fact, judging from what Quintilian says about Roman and, consequently, Greek declamation, the recitation of the ancients must have approximated our tragic declamation. The Roman stage was based on that of the Greeks.

We will speak at greater length about this matter in the section on the music of the ancients, which will be found at the end of this work.

It is well established in Europe, as I have already said, that the French, who for a century have composed the best contemporary dramas, are also the best performers of tragedies. They know how to act with the most propriety. In Italy, actors perform tragedy and comedy in the same tone of voice and with the same gestures. There is nearly no difference between the buskin and the clog. When Italian actors aim to animate moving passages, they immediately overdo it. The hero becomes a *capitan*. I will say only a word about tragedies Italian poets have written for performance. They are as inferior to the plays of Corneille and Racine as the least bad of our epic poems is inferior to Arisoto's *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. Whether from despair of success or from another motive that I do not understand, it appears that the Italians have long neglected drama. *La Mandragola* by Machiavelli is one of the best comedies since Terence.[2] While we would never take it for a witty product born in that brain, which has hatched so many profound reflections on war, politics, and (most of all) conspiracies, it remains the only Italian play of its class. The *Clizia*[3] by the same author is much inferior. I do not believe that in the course of the 17th century, the presses of Italy produced more than thirty tragedies for performance, though in that period they brought to light many works of wit. At least, I have not found a great number of tragedies in catalogues of this sort of work issued by Italians famous in the Republic of Letters in the past twenty years. These catalogues have been occasioned by the debates that Italians have undertaken for the honour of their nation.

Italian dramatic poets no longer compose anything except operas, in comparison to which all Europe says that good French operas are masterpieces of

2 *The Mandrake* (1524), by Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Florentine politician, diplomat, philosopher, and playwright, best known today as author of *The Prince*. *The Mandrake* is generally regarded as satire on the Medici rulers of Florence. It is still occasionally staged and has been made into movies.

3 A comedy (1525) based on a play by the Roman playwright Plautus. It is seldom performed.

wit, good sense, and regularity.[4] The Abbé Gravina[5] published at Naples, about thirty years ago, five tragedies to be spoken: *Palmede, Andromeda*, *Appio Claudio*, *Papiniano*, and *Servo Tullio*. In the verse Preface that he put at the head of these tragedies, Gravina elegantly complains that Melpomene, for whom the stage was invented, no longer appears in Italy except as a servant of Polyhymnia.[6] In short, Melpomene appears on stage only as the lowly slave of painting, music, and sculpture.

> *E in vece d'adoprar le forze proprie,*
> *Debba le forze adoprar degli arcefici,*
> *Di cantori, pittori, e statuarii;*
> *De'quali è divenuta ancella ignobile*
> *Colei, che sopra loro à'l sommo imperio,*
> *E su le scene à minor parte, ed infima*
> *Quella, per cui le scene s'inventarono*.[7]

In another country of Europe, the pathos of tragic declamation consisted about forty years ago in furious tones, in a dismal or very frightened bearing, and in gestures of madmen.[8] The actors of the tragic stage of which I speak dispensed with nobility in their acting, rhythm in their pronunciation, dignity in their bearing, and decency in their gait. It sufficed that they made a show of very dark and sombre haughtiness or they would appear given over to transports of fury that made them extravagant. In this theatre, Julius Caesar was allowed to

4 French and Italian operas of the baroque period were quite different. Italian opera was extravagant, harmonically adventurous, and irregular. French opera, epitomized by the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully, were noble, polished, and in good taste. Du Bos is wrong in saying that all of Europe preferred French opera. The English, for example, preferred Italian style opera and England became the home of the greatest exponent of the Italian style, George Frederic Handel who was, even when Du Bos published the first edition of his *Critical Reflections*, already at work in London.

5 Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664–1718), Italian clergyman, jurist, dramatist, and man of letters.

6 In Greek mythology, Polyhymnia is the muse of, among other things, hymns and dance. Du Bos is alluding to the popularity of opera in Italy.

7 *Tragedie Cinque* (Naples: 1717), 3.
> And instead of using its own forces
> It may use the forces of the artists
> Of whom it has become a low handmaid,
> She, who wields supreme power above them
> And has a minor role on the stage, and that an infamous
> One, for whom stages were invented.

8 Du Bos apparently refers to the acting of the English stage.

pull his hair, as would a man from the dregs of the people. In order to better display his passion, Alexander could stomp his foot, a display that students who play tragedies in our schools are not allowed to make.

In another country, heroes are entirely debased by low or indecent things that they do on stage. On the stage of which I speak, Scipio smokes a pipe of tobacco and drinks a pint of beer in his tent while contemplating his plans for battle against the Carthaginians.

I will not speak here of the Flemish theatre because, in tragedy, it does little more than copy the French stage ever since they performed passion plays. Flemish actors have a small number of original tragedies and their declamation in these plays is only a little less musical and animated than that of their French counterparts.

Not only is our tragic stage noble, but it is also purged of all frivolous devices. It is cleansed of all childish spectacles that only serve to degrade the dignity of Melpomene. This is how one of the greatest English tragedians has described our productions:

> I should therefore, in this Particular, recommend to my Countrymen the Example of the *French* Stage, where the Kings and Queens always appear unattended, and leave their Guards behind the Scenes. I should likewise be glad if we imitated the *French* in banishing from our Stage the Noise of Drums, Trumpets, and Huzzas; which is sometimes so very great, that when there is a Battle in the *Hay-Market* Theatre, one may hear it as far as *Charing-Cross*.[9]
>
> [*The Spectator*, 13 April 1711]

Addison, whom I have just cited, also says a lot of things in this essay, and in the one published eight days later, critical of common English theatrical practices. These appeared to him, with reason, to be corrupt. These include the practice of displaying the most terrible instruments of torture, and at times even torture. There is also the practice of having hideous spectres and horrible phantoms appear. True, in his view French poets are overly careful to avoid any kind of display. For example, he criticizes the great Corneille for not having killed Camille on stage [*The Horaces*, Act 4]. Corneille, he says, in order to avoid bloodshed on the stage, renders the action of young Horace even more atrocious by giving him time for reflection. Corneille failed to reflect that he must, at the end of the play, redeem the man who murders his sister.[10] Horace would be less odious if

9 *The Spectator*, no. 42, 18 April 1711. Citation corrected.

10 *Horace* (1640), a play concerned with the conflict between Rome and Alban. The two

he killed Camille at the moment when she uttered her imprecations against Rome. Whether or not there is something to this observation, one cannot disagree that, if tragic productions are too full of spectacles in England, they are too devoid of spectacle in France. Consider the scene in which Andromache [In the tragedy by Racine] is ready to kill herself and commends Astianax, the son of herself and Hector, to the care of her confidant. Ask the actress who plays the role of Andromache whether the scene would be even more touching if the unfortunate child made an appearance and provided an opportunity for the expression of maternal tenderness, which should never appear restrained in such a situation.

Comedy and tragedy are different. I do not believe that one can say that one contemporary manner of declaiming comedies is better than another. Each country must have its own particular manner of declaiming comedies.

In the presentation of comedies, the goal is not to promote veneration of the characters who appear upon the stage. Rather, the goal is to make them recognizable by the audience. Thus, comic actors must copy the peculiar modes of expression, in bearing and pronunciation, of their nation. They must pattern themselves on their compatriots. Generally speaking, some peoples vary more their tones of voice, put more marked and frequent emphases in their pronunciation, and gesticulate more than others. Since some nations are livelier than others, the actions of some are livelier than the actions of others. Their sentiments and passions burst out with an impetuosity that does not appear in other nations. The French do not use certain gestures, certain displays with their fingers, that the Italians do. Neither do they laugh like the Italians. The French do not vary their pronunciation with forms of emphasis that are common in Italy, even in friendly conversations. A comic actor who, while speaking his lines, imitates the pronunciation and gesticulation of a foreign people, would violate the rule that we have stated. For example, an English comic actor who put as much vivacity into his gestures, as much disquiet into his countenance, as much vehemence on his face, and as many exclamations in his speech as a Florentine, would act as an Italian comic actor. In short, he would act badly. The English, who must serve as his models, do not act thus. Something that is enough to agitate an Italian is not enough to make an Englishman raise an

---

cities decided that the conflict will be resolved by a battle between three champions on each side. Three brothers (the Horatii) represent Rome and another three brothers (the Curiatii) represent Alban. In the end, only one of the Horatii brothers survives. His sister Camille reproaches him, since she was engaged to one of the Curiatti, and Horace kills her.

eyebrow. An Englishman who is condemned to death displays less agitation than an Italian who is issued a small fine.

Thus, the best comic actor is the one who best succeeds in theatrical imitation of his models, whoever they may be. Suppose that the comic actors of some country are more pleasing to strangers than the comic actors of another country. This will be because the former are modeled after a nation that naturally has more gentility in its manners and more grace in its expression than other nations have.

CHAPTER 43

That the Pleasure That We Take in Theatre Is Not Produced by Illusion.

Some smart people have believed that illusion is the primary cause of the pleasure we get from public shows and theatrical scenes. On their view, the production of *El Cid* gives us great pleasure on account of the illusion it creates for us. The verses of the great Corneille, the set of the stage, and the oratory of the actors impose on us to such an extent that they make us believe that, instead of attending the representation of the event, we are attending the event itself, and that we are seeing the real action, and not an imitation. To me, this opinion seems indefensible.

It is not possible to create an illusion in the mind of a sensible person, at least in someone who previously was under no sensory illusion. True, everything we see in the theatre competes for our emotions. But nothing creates an illusion for our senses because everything is presented *as* an imitation. To put it another way, everything appears as a copy. We do not arrive at the theatre thinking that we will see the actual Ximene and Rodrigo. We do not bring the expectations of one who, having allowed himself to be persuaded by a magician that he will be made to see a ghost, enters into the cave where the phantom is supposed appear. This expectation may prepare him well for the illusion, but we bring nothing of the sort to the theatre. The playbill promised us only an imitation, or copies of Ximene and Phaedre. We arrive at the theatre prepared to see what we see there. There are a hundred things constantly before our eyes, which from moment to moment serve to remind us of where we are and who we are. Despite the most vivid emotions, the spectator keeps his wits about him, without falling into the extravagances of passion. The most that can happen is that a very sensitive young person may be carried away by an entirely new pleasure for her, and her emotion and surprise will cause her to shout or gesture involuntarily, revealing that she is paying no attention to her facial expressions, which are supposed to be kept in check in public. But she will soon become aware of her momentary preoccupation, or to be more precise, of her distraction. For this reason, it is not true that in her delight she believed she saw Rodrigo and Ximene. She was moved only nearly as much as if she had she been there, and had actually seen Rodrigo at the feet of his mistress as he was about to go and kill her father.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_047

It is the same in painting. The painting of Attila, painted by Raphael, derived none of its value from what it impresses upon us in order to seduce us and make us believe that we are seeing the actual Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the air, menacing with drawn swords the King, who is surrounded by soldiers threatening to sack Rome. But in the painting of which I speak,[1] Attila artlessly appears as a frightened Scythian, and Pope Leo, who is explaining this vision to him, carries himself with a noble assurance and a posture that befits his dignity. Everyone in attendance very closely resembles men who find themselves in circumstances similar to those Raphael imagined. Even the horses succeed in driving the principal action. The imitation is so *vraisemblable* that it makes as serious an impression on viewers as the event itself would have had on them.

We tell many stories of animals, children, and people who have been impressed by pictures to the extent that they have mistaken them for the objects of which they were imitations [Pliny, bk. 3, ch. 10].[2] It is said that all people have fallen under the illusion that you regard as impossible. Add to that the many birds that crashed their heads against the perspective of Ruel,[3] having been deceived by a sky he imitated so perfectly, they thought they might fly across it. People have often spoken to portraits, believing they are speaking to other people. Everyone knows the story of the portrait of Rembrandt's servant.[4] It was set up in a window where this girl sometimes sat, and neighbours came by one after the other to have a conversation with the canvas.

I am completely in agreement with all these facts, which prove not that illusion is the source of the pleasure that poetic or pictorial imitations instil in us, but only that pictures are sometimes quite capable of making us fall for the illusion. The proof is that the pleasure continues when there is no more room for surprise. Pictures are pleasing without the help of this illusion, which is nothing more than a moment of pleasure that they provide us and, at that, a very rare one. Pictures are pleasing even though we bear in mind that they are just

1 *The Meeting of Leo the Great and Attila* (1514), in the Vatican.

2 Pliny, *Natural History*. The reference should be to Books 35, 36 and 38.

3 Du Bos draws upon Perrault, *Paralèlle des Anciens et des moderns*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Paris: 1692), 200. Here Perrault relates a story of birds killing themselves by flying into a painting of a sky made by Ruel or, as Perrault has it, Rüel. Johann Baptist de Ruel (1634–1685), Flemish painter and singer. The painting is *Jesus on a donkey* (date unknown), located in the triumphal entry in the Bethphage Church in Jerusalem. The fresco depicts Jesus riding on a donkey, accompanied by his disciples, with a striking blue sky decorated with clouds.

4 This painting is called *A Girl at a Window* (1645). It depicts a young girl in a slightly sensual pose, with a shirt open at the neck and wearing jewelry. She sits and rests her elbows on a table, while gazing intently at the viewer. The person depicted is not known, and many people have speculated that this may have been a servant girl.

canvases on which colours have been artfully placed. A tragedy moves those who see most clearly all of the devices that the poet's genius and the actor's talent put into the work so that they move us.

The pleasure that exceptional pictures and dramas are able to generate in us is equally great when we see them for a second time, and when there is no longer an occasion for illusion. The first time we saw them, we were dazzled by their beauties. Our minds, overly restless and rushing to fixate on nothing in particular, in fact enjoyed nothing [of the experience]. Wanting to scan everything and see everything, we saw nothing distinctly. Everyone has experienced what I mention, if some book that someone has impatiently longed to read falls into their hands. Before being able to read the first few pages with rapt attention, he is bound to flip through the book cover to cover. Similarly, when we see a beautiful tragedy, or even a beautiful painting, for a second time, our minds are better able to control themselves before the object they have discovered, and can analyse it as a whole. The general idea of the work has taken its seat, so to speak, in the imagination, because such an idea needs to reside there for some time before taking its place. This is how the mind gives itself completely over to what moves it. Only after having given a 'once over' to the whole mass of the building, and after having placed a distinct idea of that palace in his imagination, does a curious architect examine a single column, and focus on a single part of a palace.

CHAPTER 44

That Dramatic Poems Purge the Passions.

Knowing violent passions well is enough to make us sincerely desire never to be subject to them and resolve to prevent them from, at least, subjugating us so easily.[1] A person who knows the disquiet that the passion of love is capable of causing; a person who knows the extravagances into which it will lead the wisest, and the dangers into which it will throw even the most circumspect, will very sincerely desire never to be given over to this intoxication. Now, dramatic poets, by showing us the errors into which our passions can lead us, make us know much more about the symptoms and apparent natures of these passions than a book could provide. This is why people in every era say that tragedy purges the passions. Other poems may well have an effect approaching that of tragedy. However, since the impression they make on us is not nearly as great as the impression that tragedy, with the assistance of the theatre, makes, they do not purge the passions as effectively as tragedy.

The people with whom we are familiar nearly always leave us guessing about the true motives for their actions and what is found in their hearts. What emerges at first, and seems only a spark, often comes from a blaze that wreaks internal havoc. Thus, it often happens that we deceive ourselves in wanting to guess what people think. More often still, they deceive us themselves by what they say about the state of their hearts and minds. Tragic characters drop the mask in front of us. The entire audience is party to their true aims and their most secret sentiments. They leave nothing for the audience to guess at except things that can easily be surmised. The same may be said of comedies.

Moreover, the profession of the dramatic poet is to depict passions as they really are, without exaggerating the heartache that accompanies them and the distress that follows them. He teaches by examples. Finally, we recognize ourselves in his pictures, which must convince us of his sincerity. The faithful depiction of the passions suffices to make us afraid and make us resolve to avoid them with all of the determination of which we are capable. There is no need for this picture to be fraught. After having seen *El Cid*, who could not learn to have a light-hearted conversation at a time when our mood is bitter? What resolution do we not form of not discussing matters dear to our hearts when

1 In this chapter, Du Bos is influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics*. There Aristotle introduces the concept of catharsis: he suggests that the representation of tragic emotions such as fear and pity cleanses audiences of these emotions.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_048

revealing them will lead to a quarrel? Do we not promise to be quiet, at least on all of those occasions when our hot-blooded imagination can make us say four words that we would gladly ransom for six months of silence? This fear of the passions cannot fail to have some effect.

Virtually all passions begin as a small fire. This is soon extinguished if a justifiable distrust of ourselves makes us fly from objects capable of fanning the flames. That Phaedra is a criminal despite herself is a myth as much as the birth of Bacchus or of Minerva.[2]

Having said this, do not take me to be saying that drama is a panacea for moral ills. I am very far from thinking anything like this. I only want to say that drama sometimes corrects people and it often gives them the desire to be better. In this way, the spectacle conceived by the Lacedaemonians to inspire their youth with an aversion to drunkenness had its effect.[3] The madness and inebriation of these slaves, displayed on a stage, inspired the audience with disgust, leaving them to resolve to resist the attractions of this vice. This resolution prevented some young people from drinking wine to excess, though it was incapable of restraining others. Some people are too fiery to be restrained by examples and some passions burn too brightly to be extinguished by philosophical reflections. Thus, tragedy purges passions approximately as medicine cures and as defensive armour protects against the blows of offensive weapons. It does not always work, but sometimes it does.

I have supposed, in all that I have said so far, that the morality of theatrical pieces is as good as it ought to be. Dramatists worthy of writing for the stage have always regarded the obligation to inspire hatred for vice and love for virtue as the primary obligation of their art. "I can assure you," Racine says on this subject, "that I have not written a tragedy in which virtue is more on display. The least faults are severely punished. The mere thought of crime is regarded with as much horror as the crime itself. The weaknesses of love are shown to be real weaknesses. The passions are presented only to show the problems that

2 In Racine's *Phèdre*, the title character's illicit love—which, Du Bos implies she could have resisted—for her stepson Hippolytus begins a chain of events that ends with the death of them both. In Greek mythology Athena (the Greek counterpart of Minerva) was born fully formed and armed from the forehead of Zeus, king of the gods. A mortal woman, pregnant by Zeus with Bacchus, demanded to see Zeus. She dies, unable to endure his splendour. Bacchus is saved when Zeus sews Bacchus into his thigh. According to Du Bos, the claim that Phaedra is innocent is as plausible as either of these myths.

3 According to Plutarch, the Spartans (the principal people of Lacedaemonia) forced their servants, the Helots, to become roaring drunk. The Helots were then led "in that condition into their public halls, that the children might see what a sight a drunken man is; they made them to dance low dances, and sing ridiculous songs." *Life of Lycurgus*, 28.8–10.

they cause, and vice is always depicted in colours that enable us to recognize and hate its deformity. This is the proper goal that anyone who works in theatre must profess. It is the goal that the original tragic poets had in view at all times. Their theatre was a school where virtue was taught no less well than in the schools of the philosophers" ['Preface,' *Phaedra*].

Writers who do not want to understand how tragedy purges the passions, allege, by way of justifying their view, that the goal of tragedy is to arouse the passions. A little reflection would have enabled them to eliminate this obfuscation, if they had bothered to look.

Tragedy certainly claims that all of the passions that it depicts move us, but it does not always intend that our affect be the same as the affect of the character tormented by a passion, nor that we adopt his sentiments. Its most common goal is to excite in us sentiments opposed to those that it gives to its characters. For example, when tragedy depicts Medea, who revenged herself by the murder of her own children, she is depicted in such a manner that we acquire a horror of the passion for vengeance, which is capable of carrying us to such disastrous excess. The poet claims only to inspire the sentiments that he gives to characters who are depicted as virtuous. Of these sentiments, he only wants to inspire those that are laudable. To say that tragedy purges the passions is only to speak of vicious passions and passions that are prejudicial to society. A tragedy that promoted disgust for passions useful to society, such as patriotism, love of glory, the fear of dishonour, and so on, would be as immoral as a tragedy that made vice appealing.

True, some dramatists are ignorant of their art and, without knowledge of mores, often represent vice as a greatness of soul and virtue pettiness of mind and heart. But this fault must be attributed to ignorance, or rather to the depravity of the artist, and not to the art. A surgeon who cripples those that he bleeds is inept, but his fault does not disparage bleeding and does not discredit surgery. A ditzy author may destroy one of the principal elements of society, say, children's confidence that their parents love them more than they love themselves. His plot turns on a father's complex machinations, designed to imprison his blameless children and appropriate their wealth, so that he can dally with his mistress. The author of whom I speak, displays this enigma of iniquity on the comic stage without showing him to be more odious than Terence seeks to make odious the youthful follies of Aeschinus and Pamphilus.[4] The volatility of youth leads them into, despite their remorse, escapades that the world excuses.

4 The indiscretions of Pamphilus, a character in Terence's *Andria* (166 BC), include impregnating Glycerium prior to their marriage. Aeschinus, a character in Terence's *Adelphoe* (160 BC), elopes with a young woman.

Their fathers do not always despair of them as much as they say. Besides, the plots of Terence's plays have denouements in which the son simultaneously satisfies his duty and his inclination. Paternal tenderness struggling with reason and the agitations of a well-bred child, tormented by fear of displeasing his parents or of losing his mistress, give rise to several interesting incidents which can result in a useful moral. But the barbarity of a father who wants to sacrifice his children in a rage, that youth can no longer excuse, can only be regarded as an enormous crime, and akin to Medea's crime. If this crime is to be shown on the stage, if it can provide a useful moral, it must be depicted in the blackest colours. In the end, it must receive the most severe punishment that Melpomene employs, not those used by Thalia. It is contrary to good morals to give the impression that this act is only an ordinary fault, by using this subject in a comedy. This odious piece is to be condemned, but we can agree at the same time that the comedies of Terence, and most of those by Molière, are suitable for purging the passions.

CHAPTER 45

Of Music Properly Speaking.

It remains to speak of music, the third means that people have invented for giving poetry a greater power, and for enabling it to make a great impression on us. Just as the painter imitates the lines and colours of nature, so the musician imitates its tones, accents, sighs, vocal inflections and, in short, all of the sounds by means of which nature expresses its sentiments and passions. All of these sounds, as we have already shown, have a marvellous power to move us because they are signs of passions. These signs are established by nature, from which they receive their force. In contrast, spoken words are arbitrary signs of passions. Spoken words only receive their meaning and value from human convention, which gives a word currency only in a particular country.

In order to make the imitation of natural sounds more capable of pleasing and touching, music has reduced these sounds to the continuous musical line that is called melody. The art has also found two means of making song more capable of pleasing and moving us. The one is harmony and the other is rhythm.

The consonances in which harmony consists greatly charm our ears. The concurrence of the various parts of a musical composition that make these consonances contribute to the expressiveness of the sound that the musician intends to imitate. The *basso continuo* and the other parts greatly assist the melody in expressing the subject being imitated more completely.

The ancients called *rhythm in music* what we call *metre* and *tempo*. Metre and tempo give soul, so to speak, to a musical composition. By showing how to vary the metre, the science of rhythm removes from music the uniform beat that would soon make it tiresome. Secondly, rhythm will give a musical composition a new *vraisemblance*. It does so because rhythm makes a composition imitate the progression and tempo of noises and natural sounds that it already imitates by melody and harmony. Thus rhythm gives a greater *vraisemblance* to imitation.

Music imitates by recourse to melody, harmony, and rhythm. *In cantu tria praecipue notanda sunt, harmonia, sermo et rythmus. Harmonia versatur circa sonum: Sermo circa intellectum verborum et distinctam enuntiationem: Rythmus circa concinnum cantici motum*.[1] Similarly, painting imitates by means of line, *chiaroscuro*, and local colours.

1 Vossius, *Of Poetry*, Preface: "In song, three things are particularly noteworthy: harmony, words, and rhythm. Harmony concerns the sound, words concern clear enunciation and comprehen-

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_049

The natural signs of the passions that music resembles, and which it artfully uses to augment the power of words in a composition, must render the words more capable of touching us. This is because natural signs have a marvellous power to move us. The signs receive this power from nature itself. *Nihil est autem tam cognatum mentibus nostris quam numeri atque voces; quibus et excitamur et incendimur et lenimur et languescimus*, said one of the most judicious observers of human affects [Cic. Bk. 3. *Or.*].[2] Thus the pleasure of the ear becomes the pleasure of the heart. Thus song was born, and the observation that the words of these songs acquired an additional power when they were sung, that they lacked when spoken, gave rise to the practice of putting musical recitatives in performances. Subsequently whole dramas came to be sung. This is opera.

Thus, there is truth in the recitatives of opera and this truth consists in the imitation of tones, accents, sighs, and sounds naturally suited to the sentiments contained in the words. The same truth can be found in the harmony and rhythm of the entire composition.

Music is not content with imitating in its songs the wordless language of humanity and all of the natural sounds that we instinctively make. This art has imitated all of the noises that are most capable of making an impression on us when we hear them in nature. Music uses only instruments to imitate these inarticulate sounds. We usually call these imitations *symphonies*. However, symphonies do not cease to play, so to speak, various roles in our opera, and these with considerable success.

In the first place, although this music is purely instrumental, it still contains an accurate imitation of nature. In the second place, there are several sounds in nature that are capable of producing a huge effect on us, when we hear them in the appropriate sections of a drama.

The truth of an instrumental imitation consists in the resemblance between this symphony and the noise that it claims to imitate. There is truth in a symphony, composed to imitate a tempest, when the music of the symphony, its harmony and its rhythm, make us hear a noise similar to the tumult of the wind and the roaring waves, which clash with each other or break against the rocks. An example, is the symphony that imitates a tempest in Marais's *Alcyone*.[3]

---

sion, and rhythm concerns regular movement of the song." Isaac Vossius (1618–1689), Dutch scholar and bibliophile, was the author of *De Poematum cantu et viribus Rythmi* [Of Poetry with singing and strong rhythm] (1673), an early musicological work.

2 Cicero, *Orator* 3.197: "But nothing is so akin to our own minds as rhythms and words—these rouse us up to excitement, and smooth and calm us down."

3 Marin Marais (1656–1728) a major French viol player and composer from the generation after

Thus, although these symphonies do not make us hear a single articulate sound, they are still able play roles in dramas. This is because they engage us in the action, by making an impression similar to the one that would be made by the noise that it imitates, if we heard it in circumstances that we hear the symphony represent. For example, the imitation of the noise of a tempest that is going to drown a character in which a poet has truly made us take a great interest, affects us as would the noise of a nearby real tempest that is about to drown a person in whom we are fervently interested. It would pointless to repeat here that the impression made by the symphony will not be as deep as the impression made by the real tempest. As I have already said several times, the impression that an imitation makes on us is weaker than the impression made by the imitated thing. *Sine dubio in omni re vincit imitationem veritas* [Cic.*Or*. Bk 3].[4]

Thus, it is not surprising that symphonies touch us deeply, since their sounds, as Longinus says, "are only simple imitations of an inarticulate noise and, if one may speak thus, sounds which have only part of their being, and a half life" [*On the Sublime* ch. 32].[5]

This is why, in all countries and all times, the inarticulate song of instruments is used to move people's hearts and to cultivate certain sentiments in them, especially on occasions when these sentiments could not be inspired by the power of speech. All civilized peoples have always used musical instruments in their religious ceremonies. All peoples have had instruments suitable for warfare. They have used their music not only to convey the orders of commanders to those who must obey, but also to rouse the courage of combatants, and even sometimes to check their courage. These instruments have been variously played, according to the effect that they are intended to make, and people have sought to render their sound suitable for their intended use.

Perhaps we would have studied the art of playing military instruments as much as the ancients did, if the tumult of firearms left our soldiers in a state in which they could distinctly hear the sounds of these instruments. But though we have not worked hard to perfect military instruments, and though we have so neglected the art of playing them, which was highly respected among the ancients, that we regard those who practice this art today as the lowest part of

---

Lully, with whom he studied. *Alcyone* (1706) is based on the story of Ceyx and Alcyone from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Act Four contains a famous storm scene.

4 Cicero, *Orator* 3.215: "there can be no doubt that reality beats imitation in everything."

5 Du Bos gives the reference as *On the Sublime* 34; this was incorrect in the editions of his day; 39.3 is correct in modern editions. Du Bos' translation is inaccurate.

an army, we still find the initial principles of this art in our camps. Our trumpets do not sound the charge as they sound the retreat. Our drums do not beat the chamade[6] with the same pattern they use to beat the charge.

The symphonies of our opera, and especially the symphonies of Lully's operas, the greatest musical poet whose works we have, make probable the most surprising effects of ancient music. Consider the sounds of war in *Theseus*, the soft music of *Armide*, and several other symphonies by the same composer. Perhaps, they would have produced the effects, related by ancient authors, that seem so unbelievable to us, if people as naturally sensitive as the Athenians had heard them in the context of performances in which they had already been moved by the events of a tragedy. Do we not feel that these airs make on us the impression that the musician wanted to produce? Do we not sense that these symphonies agitate us, calm us, and soften us? In short, that they act on us approximately as the verses of Corneille and those of Racine can act on us?

Suppose the anonymous author of the treatise, *De Poematum cantu et viribus Rythmi*, whom I believe to be Isaac Vossius[7] because my friends have told me so, and because this work is full of biases in favour of China and the Chinese, that everyone very well knows were particular interests of this learned man, had been able to hear the operas of Lully, and especially the later ones, before he wrote the treatise of which I speak. He would then not have said, as he did [In the Preface], that modern music has nothing, neither the power or the energy of ancient music. "We must not be astonished," this passage says, "that our music cannot make the effect that ancient music could make. This is since the most varied melodies and the richest harmony are only musical fads and harmonious nonsense when a musician does not know how to make sensible use of this melody and harmony to express his subject. We must not be astonished when a musician also does not know how to animate his composition with a rhythm suitable to its subject so this composition expresses something and expresses it well." *Quippe cum omnis cantus aut harmonia quantumvis elegans si et verborum intellectus et motus absint aliquid significantes, nihil nisi inanem continent Sonum; nemini mirum videri debet, abesse ab hodierna musica* [*eam*] *virtutem, quae tantopere in veteri praedicatur*.[8]

6 A signal for a parlay.

7 Du Bos' conjecture was correct.

8 Isaac Vossius, *On Poetry with song and strong rhythm*, Preface: "Since however every song or elegant harmony contains nothing except empty sound, if both the expression and signifying movements are in some way absent; it should be a surprise to no one that music from our day lacks that virtue which shows forth so greatly in music of antiquity."

If some modern music lacks the merit of which Vossius speaks here, it is not the music of Lully. What Vossius calls here *verborum intellectum* or expression is perfect in this musician. People who do not know French can guess the sentiments and passions of the actors that he makes declaim to music. We can imagine what comparison Vossius would have made between Italian cantatas and sonatas and the symphonies and arias of Lully, if he had known them when he wrote the book of which I speak. But it appears from the date at the bottom of his Preface [In the form of letter to Lord Arlington][9] that he wrote it in 1671, precisely when Lully was working on his first opera.

Thus, symphonies suited to the subject and well-characterized contribute a lot towards making us engaged by the events of an opera, in which we can say that it plays a role. According to the story, Atys[10] sleeps and is presented with a series of varied objects as he reposes. They are made more *vraisemblable* and more touching by the impressions that symphonies with various characteristics, which precede the repose, and the airs that succeed each other during the repose, make on us. The symphony in the opera *Roland*, that is commonly called *Logistilla*,[11] plays its role in the plot very well once it is introduced. The plot of Act Five, where the symphony is found, consists in restoring Roland's sanity, after he was left insane in Act Four. This lovely symphony gives an idea of the music which Quintilian and Cicero say the Pythagoreans used, before going to bed, to calm the tumultuous ideas that the emotions of the day left in the imagination. In the same way, the Pythagoreans used symphonies with the opposite character to rouse their minds when they awoke in order to make themselves ready for action. *Pythagoreis certe moris fuit, et cum evigilassent, animos ad lyram excitare, quo essent ad agendum erectiores, et cum somnum peterent, ad eandem prius lenire mentes, ut, si quid fuisset turbidiorum cogitationum, componerent* [*Instit*. Bk. 9. ch. 9].[12] By the way, the first dance air in the Prologue to *Amadis*,[13] the one that comes after the end of his repose, provides an idea of the airs to the sound of which Pythagoreans awoke.

---

9 Henry Bennet, First Earl of Arlington (1681–1685), English statesman.

10 *Atys* (1676). Du Bos refers to the section of Act 3 in which a series of pleasant dreams appear to Atys. These are succeeded by bad dreams that remind him that disobliging the gods has consequences.

11 Lully's *Roland* (1685), an opera based on Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. Logistille (Logistilla) is a fairy who assists Roland in regaining his sanity.

12 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.12: "The Pythagoreans, indeed, had the custom of rousing their souls on waking with the music of the lyre, so as to be more alert for action, and of using the same instrument, when they retired to sleep, to calm their souls first, so as to lay to rest any turbulent thoughts they may have had."

13 Lully's *Amadis* or *Amadis de Gaule* (1684).

Return to the symphony from *Roland*, which gives us an idea of the airs to the sound of which the Pythagoreans prepared themselves for sleep. It has all of the truth of an imitation. It is so *vraisemblable* that it can produce the effect that the artistry of the musician intended. Above all, sentiment teaches us that it is the appropriate thing for calming the agitations of the spirit. Since sentiment can always be explained by careful investigation, we can find the reasons the music is so appropriate for creating the impression that we already felt.

Silence is not the best means to calm an over agitated imagination. Experience and reason teach us that some sounds are more appropriate for calming it than even silence. These sounds are those that, like the ones in *Logistilla*, have a regular beat for a long period. Successive notes are not much higher or much lower, much slower or much faster, than the notes that precede them. Most often, the melody progresses by means of small intervals. Sounds that neither accelerate nor decelerate, in either pitch or tempo, and follow a slow and uniform course, seem to be more suited to making minds adopt a calm course, in which tranquility consists, than a silence that allows them to follow the strained and tumultuous course on which they had been set. A person who speaks for a long time in the same tone of voice, puts others to sleep. That their somnolence comes from the continuance of a sound that always remains about the same is proved by the fact that the listener wakes with a start if the speaker suddenly ceases to speak or if he makes an exclamation in a tone much louder than the one he had previously used. Every day we see people with insomnia who can only sleep to the sound of reading or a conversation. When this sound ceases, they awake.

Thus, there is *vraisemblance* in music as in poetry. As the poet is required in his writings to conform to objective truth, so must the musician conform to this truth in composition of his symphonies. Let me explain myself. Musicians often compose symphonies to express sounds that we have never heard and which, perhaps, were never found in nature. Such, for example, is the bellowing of the earth when Pluto issues from hell,[14] the whistling of the air when Apollo inspires the Pythia,[15] the sound that a ghost makes in issuing from his tomb, and the rustling of the foliage of the oaks of Dodona.[16] These symphonies

14 Pluto, God of the Underworld, features in Lully's opera, *Alceste* (1674).

15 Commonly known as the Oracle of Delphi, the Pythia was the High Priestess of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi. She gave answers to questions supposedly inspired by Apollo. Du Bos refers to Lully's opera *Bellérophon* (1679), in which Apollo possesses the Pythia. Each of her phrases is accompanied by sounds expressing, for example, rushing wind.

16 Dodona was the site of an oracle in ancient Greece. The priests or priestesses interpreted

agree with reality. The *convenientia finge*[17] of Horace has a place in music as well as in poetry. We know when the required *vraisemblance* is achieved. Music is certainly *vraisemblable* when it makes an effect approaching the effect that the sounds that it imitates would have made. To us, they appear to conform to these *vraisemblable* sounds, and they do not permit us to be misled by other sounds we have heard. We say of symphonies of this sort, like those which can imitate real sounds, that they express or that they do not express well. We praise that of the tomb of Amadis and that of the opera *Isis*,[18] saying that they imitate nature well, even though we have never seen nature in the state that the symphony claims to copy. So, though in a certain sense these symphonies are invented at will, they nevertheless help a lot to make the performance touching and the events of the drama poignant. For example, the lament in the symphony that Lully included in *Amadis* [Act 3],[19] or the ghost of Ardan issuing from his tomb, make as great an impression on our ears as the scene and the acting make on our eyes. Our imagination is stimulated at the same time by the organs of sight and the organs of hearing, and is more moved by the appearance of the ghost than it would have been if only the eyes had been seduced. The symphony by Destouches that precedes the oracle issued by the oaks of Dodona produces the same effect [In the opera *Isis*].[20] The rustling of the trees' foliage is represented by the symphony's melody, harmony, and rhythm. It inclines us to believe that the speaking of the leaves is *vraisemblable*. It seems likely that a sound similar to this symphony preceded and prepared the words that the oracle issued.

However, symphonies that seem so lovely when they are used to imitate a certain sound would seem insipid, they could even sound bad, if they were used to imitate another sound. The symphony from [Destouches'] *Isis*, of which I have just spoken, would seem ridiculous if it were put in the place of the lament for Amadis. These musical works that move us so much, when they are part of a theatrical performance, would please only moderately if they were heard as sonatas or as independent symphonic movements, by someone who had never heard them at the opera. Such a person would judge them without knowing their greatest merit, that is, the way that they coordinate with the drama in which, so to speak, they play a role.

---

the sound of rustling oak leaves as a way to answer questions. Du Bos refers to the ghost scene in Lully's *Amadis*.

17 Horace, *Art of Poetry* l. 119: "Create consistently."

18 Lully's opera (1677), called *Issé* in French.

19 The scene in which Ardan leaves his tomb is also from *Amadis*.

20 Du Bos refers to a scene from the opera *Isis* (*Issé*) (1697) by André Cardinal Destouches (1672–1749), French composer. *Isis* was performed for Louis XIV and the king is reported to have said that he enjoyed the opera as much as those of Lully.

The first principles of music are the same as those of poetry and painting. Like poetry and painting, music is an imitation. Music would not be valuable if it did not conform to the general rules of these two arts on the choice of subjects, *vraisemblance*, and several other points. As Cicero said, *Omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent habent quoddam commune vinculum et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur* [*Pro Arch.*].[21]

Some people are more touched by the colours of pictures than by the expression of passions. Similarly, in music, some people are only aware of the charm of the melody or the richness of the harmony. These people do not sufficiently consider whether the melody imitates well what it is supposed to imitate or whether it suits the meanings of the words that are set to it. They do not require the musician to match his melody with the sentiments contained in the words that he sets to music. They are content if the melodies are various, gracious, or even outré. For them, it is sufficient that the music roughly expresses some words of the libretto. The number of musicians who adopt this taste, as if music were incapable of doing anything better, is only too large. If they set to music, for example, the lines of the psalm *Dixit Dominus*, which begin with the words, *De torrente in via bibet*,[22] focus solely on expressing the rapidity of the stream in its course rather than focussing on the meaning of this passage, which contains a prophecy concerning the Passion of Christ. Yet, the expression of a word would not touch us as much as the expression of a sentiment, unless the word by itself contains a sentiment. If the musician does something to express a word that is only part of a sentence, he must not lose sight of the sense of the entire sentence that he sets to music.

I would happily say that music by a composer who does not know how to make his art move us is on a par with pictures that are merely well coloured and poems that are merely well written. The beauties of execution must, in poetry, as in painting, serve to give a work the beauties of invention and strokes of genius that depict nature. Similarly, in music, richness and variety of harmonies, charms, and melodic novelty must only serve to embellish the language of nature and of the passions. The science of composition is a servant, if I may use this expression, that the genius of the musician must keep in his pay, as the genius of the poet keeps in his employ the ability to rhyme. All is lost, if you will pardon the expression, if the servant becomes mistress of the house and is allowed to arrange matters as she pleases, as if it were a home

21 Cicero, *For Archias* 1.2: "Indeed, the subtle bond of a mutual relationship links together all arts which have any bearing upon the common life of mankind."

22 The *Dixit Dominus* comes from Psalm 110. It contains the words, "He shall drink of the brook in the way."

made only for her. I think that all poets and musicians would agree with me, if it were not much easier to rhyme by the book than to sustain a poetic style or to discover natural and gracious melodies without regard for the true. One cannot move without genius, but an education in art is enough to learnedly compose music and richly rhyme in poetry, even though one has applied oneself without genius.

CHAPTER 46

Some Reflections on the Music of the Italians. That the Italians Only Cultivated This Art after the French and Flemish.

These reflections appear to me to lead naturally to a discussion of the difference between Italian and French musical tastes. I speak of the contemporary Italian taste, which is more different from the taste of the French than it was during the pontificate of Urban VIII.[1] Though nature does not change, and though, consequently, it seems that taste in music ought not to change, it nevertheless changed some time ago in Italy. In that country, music is subject to fashion, as attire and equipages are subject to fashion in France.

Foreigners find that we understand tempo and metre better than the Italians and we are also more successful than the Italians in the part of music that the ancients called rhythm. The most able violinists of Italy would perform a gavotte badly, much less the characteristic symphonies of Lully. *Itali longioribus utuntur flexibus, unde ridentur a Gallis, veluti qui uno formando psalmate utrumque exhauriunt pulmonem. Galli praeterea in suo cantu rythmum magis observant quam Itali, unde fit ut apud illos complura occurant cantica quae concinnos et elegantes admodum habent motus* [Voss. *On Poet*. p. 123].[2] Though the Italians study metre a lot, it nevertheless seems that they do not understand rhythm and they do not know as well as us how to make it enhance expression or adapt it to the subject of imitation.

If the Abbé Gravina does not praise French music as much as Vossius, at least he is more critical of Italian music. These are his words: *Corre per gli theatri a di nostri una musica sterile* (the author had spoken of the marvellous effects of ancient music) […] *e perciò da quella assai difforme, e si esalta, per lo più quell'armonia, la quale quanto alletta gli animi stemperati e dissonanti, tanto lacera coloro che danno a guidar il senso a la ragione: perchè in cambio die esprimere ed imitare, suol più tosto estinguere e cancellare ogni sembienza*

1 Maffeo Barberini (1568–1644), pope from 1623 until his death.

2 Vossius, *On Poetry with song and strong rhythm*, 123: "Italian musicians use longer transitions just like those who exhaust either lung with the forming of a single psalm, for which they were ridiculed by the Gauls. The Gauls especially heed more rhythm than Italians, from which it happens that many songs occur among them which have very beautiful and elegant measures."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_050

di verità: sepur non godiamo, che in cambio di esprimere sentimenti e passioni umane ed imitar le nostre azioni e costumi, somigli ed imiti, come fa sovente, con quei trilli tanto ammirati, la lecora ol canario: quantumque à dì nostri vada sorgendo qualche destro modulatore, il quale contro la commun coruttela da natural giudizo e proporzion di mente portato, imita anche spesso la natura, a cui più si aviccinerebbe, se l'antica arte musica poisse da si lunghe e folte tenebre alzare il capo. Nè ci dobbiamo mara vigliare, se corrota la Poesia, si è anche corrotta la Musica: perchè come nella Ragion poetica *accennammo, tutte le arti imitative hanno una idea commune, dalla cui alterazione si alterano tutte; e particolarmente la Musica dall'alterazion della Poesia si cangia, come dal corpo l'ombra. Onde, corrotta la Poesia da i soverchi ornamenti, e dalla copia delle figure; ha communicato il suo morbo anche alla Musica, ormai tanto figurata, che ha perduta quasi la natural espressione. Nè perchè reca diletto all'orecchio, perciò si dee convenevole alla Tragedia reputare: poichè il diletto proprio della musica dramatica è quello che nasce dalla imitazione. Ma il piacer presente nasce prima dalla mancaza della vera idea, e poi per accidente da quella qualsisia modulazione di voce, che lusinga e molce la parle animale, cioè il senso solo, senza concorso della ragione: come fa qualsivoglia canto di un cardello, o di un usignuolo; e come dalla vivezza e verità, dei colori dilettano, senza imitazione di verità, le pitture chinesi* [*Della Trag*. p. 70].[3] That is to say, the music that we hear today in our theatres, it

3 Gravina, *Della Tragedia* [On Tragedy] (Naples: 1715), 70: "Nowadays our theatres mostly extol that harmony which, as it entices softened and discordant dispositions, anguishes those whose senses are guided by reason, for instead of expressing and imitating, it extinguishes and erases all semblance of truth. We should not rejoice, therefore, if instead of expressing human emotions and passions, and imitating our actions and ways of behaving, it resembles and imitates, as it often does with its much-admired trills, the warblings of goldfinches and canaries. In our day, there are some able and reasonable singers who, guided by instinctive good judgment and intelligence, often imitate nature, despite the general corruption of our times. However, they would imitate it even more if the ancient art of music could once again lift its head from a remote and tenebrous past. It is not surprising that, as poetry has been corrupted, so too has music. As I mentioned in the *Ragion poetica*, all the imitative arts have a common concept that, once altered, causes all the others to be altered. Music in particular changes with alterations to the poetry, just as the shadow changes with the body. Poetry, therefore, being corrupted by an excess of ornaments and figures, has also contaminated music, by now so full of figures as to have lost its natural expression. Because it delights the ear is no reason to consider it suited to tragedy, as the delight proper to dramatic music is that born of imitation. Pleasure today, however, is produced first of all from the lack of the true idea, and then incidentally from any movement of voice capable of enticing and appeasing man's animal nature, which is sense alone, without the participation of reason, just like the singing of any goldfinch or nightingale, or like the liveliness and variety of color of Chinese paintings, which delight without imitating truth." Enrico Fubini, *Music and Culture in Eighteenth Cen-*

is very far from producing the effect of ancient music. Instead of imitating and expressing the meaning of the words, modern music weakens and stifles it. So it displeases those with good taste as much as it pleases those who are not in accord with reason. In fact, vocal music ought to imitate the natural language of human passions, rather than the singing of goldfinches and canaries, that our music is so attached to copying with its vaunted passagework and cadenzas. Nevertheless, we have a musician, who is at the same time an artist and a man of feeling, who is not carried away by the stream [The author here refers to Buonocini].[4] But since our poetry has been corrupted by an excess of ornaments and symbols, the corruption has spread to our music. Since all of the arts have one origin and a common aim, they are doomed to pass the infection to each other. Thus, our contemporary music is so full of frippery that only with difficulty can we find a trace of natural expression. Thus it is not very suitable for tragedy. It flatters the ear, but the imitation and expression of the wordless language of the passions is the great merit of dramatic music. If our music pleases us, this is because we know nothing better and because it tickles the senses, as does the songs of goldfinches and nightingales. It is similar to Chinese pictures which do not imitate nature and which please only by vivacity and by the variety of their colours.

But I do not want to go further into an examination of the merits of French and Italian music. This is a subject treated a few years ago by smart people. Besides, I believe that it is necessary to begin with a preliminary question, which would take too long to discuss. I would like to examine at first the views of an Englishman, a man of considerable sagacity. He holds, in reproaching his compatriots for the taste that many of them have for Italian opera, that there is a style of music uniquely suitable to each language and appropriate to each nation. According to him, the French style of music is as good as the Italian. He continues, saying,

> The music of the French is indeed very properly adapted to their pronunciation and accent, as their whole opera wonderfully favours the genius of such a gay airy people. The chorus, in which that opera abounds, gives the parterre frequent opportunities of joining in concert with the stage. This inclination of the audience to sing along with the actors, so prevails with them, that I have sometimes known the performer on the stage do no

tury Europe: A Sourcebook, trans. Wolfgang Freis, Lisa Gasbarrone, and Michael Louis Leone (Chicago: 1994), 38.

4 Giovanni Bononcini or Buonocini (1670–1742), a prominent Italian composer in the first part of the 18th century. He spent several years in London where he was a rival of Handel.

> more in a celebrated song than the clerk of a parish church, who serves only to raise the psalm, and is afterwards drowned in the music of the congregation.
>
> [*Spectator*, 3 April 1711][5]

I will content myself with making some historical remarks concerning Italian music. The author of a four-canto poem on music [Published in 1713],[6] in which we find a lot of good sense and ability, holds that, when humanity began, in about the 16th century, to abandon barbarism and cultivate the fine arts, the Italians were the first musicians. Moreover, the community of nations profited from their understanding in perfecting this art. This claim does not appear to be true. Italy was certainly the cradle of architecture, painting, and sculpture, but music was revived in the Low Countries or, more accurately, it had already flourished there for a long time, respected by all of Europe. In support of my claim I could draw on Commines[7] and several other writers, but I will content myself with a witness beyond reproach, whose deposition is so well documented that it leaves no room for doubt. This witness is a Florentine, Lodovico Guiccardini, nephew of the famous historian, Francesco Guiccardini.[8] This is what he says in a well-known discourse, translated into several languages, on the Low Countries in general, which serves as the Preface to the description of their seventeen provinces:

> Our Flemings are the patriarchs of music. They have caused it to be reborn and they have carried it to a high point of perfection. They are born with a genius to cultivate music and their abilities to use music are so great that nearly all of the men and women of this country naturally sing with accuracy and grace. By joining art with nature, they succeed in

5 The English writer in question is Addison.

6 Du Bos refers to the anonymously written, *Poème sur la musique* [Poem on Music] that argues for the superiority of French music over Italian. It was reprinted in 1737 and is also mentioned in Nicolas Racot de Gradval's *Essai sur le bon goût en musique* [Essay on good taste in music] (1732), 24.

7 Philippe de Commines (1447–1511), Franco-Flemish nobleman, diplomat, and man of letters. His *Mémoires* were published between 1488 and 1501.

8 Lodovico Guicciardini (1521–1589), Florentine merchant and writer. His *Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* [Description of Lodovico Guicciardini, Florentine patriotism in the Netherlands, otherwise known as Lower Germany] (1567) is an important source of information about the history and arts of the Low Countries. Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), Italian historian and statesman; a friend of Niccolò Machiavelli.

> being admired for their composition and the performance of their songs and symphonies, in all of the courts of Christendom, where their abilities earn them a good living. I will name only those who are recently deceased or alive. Among the former are Johannes Tinctoris of Nivelles, whose rare merit will oblige me to make a particular mention below, Josquin des Prez, Johannes Ockeghem, [Jean] Richafort, Adrian Willaert, Jean Mouton, [Philippe] Verdelot, [Nicolas] Gombert, Lupus Louvart,[9] [Jean] Courtois, [Thomas] Crecquillon, [Jacob] Clemens [non Papa], and Cornelius de Hondt. Among the living are, Cipriano de Rore, Jean van Cuyck, Philippe de Monte, Orlando da Lassus, [Pierre de] Manchicourt, Josquin Baston, Christian Hollander, Jacobus Vaet, [Jean de] Bonmarché, Severin Cornet, Gert van Turnhout, Hubert Waelrant, Jacquet de Berchem of Antwerp, Andreas Pevernage, Cornelis Verdonck, and several others widely scattered through all the courts of Christendom, where they are piled with wealth and honour, as masters of this art.
>
> [Jansz edition, p. 1][10]

In fact, the posterity of Mouton and Verdelot have been famous for music in France up to the present day. I will note that Lodovico Guiccardini, who died in the year that our King Henry IV inherited the crown [In 1589], speaks of the claim of the Low Countries on furnishing Europe with musicians, as Italy and France jointly have a longstanding claim today.

Italy itself thinks that other peoples do not know more about music than they have appropriated from Italy. But Italy brought its musicians from our countries before the last century and paid them the same tribute to the art of transalpine people that it claims to receive today from all the peoples of Europe. I remember having read several passages from Italian writers that prove this, but I think I need to spare the reader the trouble of reading them and me the trouble of finding them. I do not think the reader asks for any other proof than the passage of Guiccardini that I have cited. So I will content myself with presenting a passage from Corio,[11] who has written an insightful history of Milan, known to all educated people. In the narrative of the death of Duke Galeazzo

---

9 Perhaps, Lupus Hellinck, also known as Lupus Wulfaert (1493–1541).

10 Du Bos refers to a Dutch edition of Lodovico Guiccardini's work, published Amsterdam in 1612. All of the composers listed by Du Bos are members of the Franco-Flemish school of polyphony.

11 Bernardino Corio (1459–ca. 1519), Italian humanist and author of *Historia di Milano* [History of Milan] (ca. 1500). Corio worked for Duke Galeazzo Mario Sforza (1444–1476) from 1474 until the Duke's assassination.

Mario Sforza, who was assassinated in the Church of St. Stefano in Milan in 1476, he said,

> The Duke loved music a lot, and he kept thirty transalpine musicians in his employ, to whom he gave high wages. One of them named Cordier received 100 ducats a month from the Prince.
>
> [p. 241]

The error of believing that the Italians were the restorers of music in Europe, has led the poet, of whom I speak, into another error: he turned Roland de Lattre,[12] one of the Low Country musicians praised by Guiccardini, into an Italian. This poet calls him Orlando Lasso and says that he was one of the first restorers of music. This Orlando Lasso, though some poorly informed authors write both his names with Italian style endings, was no more Italian than Scarron's *Ferdinando Ferdinandi*,[13] who was born in Caen in France. The mistake comes from the fact that Roland de Lattre wrote at the top of several of his works with Latin texts the name *Orlandus Lassus*, a Latinate form of his name, following the practices of that time. The prejudice that all good musicians were Italian led people to give these names an Italian ending instead of a French one. Orlando de Lassus was French, as were most of the musicians mentioned by Guiccardini. The name 'French,' in its most natural sense, refers to all of the people who have French as their mother tongue, in whatever country they were born. Thus, a man born in Strasbourg is German, though he was born a subject of the King of France, just as a man born in Mons in Hainault is French, since French is the first language in Hainault, though he was born the subject of a prince other than the King of France. Roland de Lattre, who died during the reign of our Henry IV, was from Mons, as one can see from the *History* of de Thou [Bk. 119, p. 459],[14] which contains a rather long eulogy for this musician. It is hard to see how Lattre can even be thought to be Italian since Italy was not his country of choice. After having stayed in various European jurisdictions, he died in

12 Better known as Orlando de Lassus or Orlando di Lasso (ca. 1530–1594), Franco-Flemish composer. His music is representative of mature Renaissance polyphony.

13 Paul Scarron. Today he is best known as the author of the *Roman Comique*, a novel set among a troupe of strolling players, one of them a Frenchman known as Ferdinando Ferdinandi. This work was translated several times into English, one translation being done by Oliver Goldsmith.

14 Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), French historian and President of the Parlement of Paris. De Thou was the author of *Historia sui temporis*, a large-scale work divided into 138 books or chapters. The work was controversial and placed on the Papal *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

the service of Duke William of Bavaria, and was buried at Munich. Finally, this musician came after Gaudimelle[15] and several other famous musicians from the time of Henry II and Francis I.

Let us return to opera and to the energy that music gives to verse. What the art of the musician adds to the art of the poet provides, in a way, the *vraisemblance* lacking in this sort of performance. Some people will say that actors always speaking in Alexandrine verse, as they do in ordinary tragedies, is not *vraisemblable*. I agree, but *vraisemblance* is more offended by actors who deal with their passions, their quarrels, and their interests in song. The pleasure that we take in music nevertheless compensates for this defect. Music's expressiveness gives operatic scenes more pathos than the failure of *vraisemblance* subtracts from them.

Thus one cries during the touching scenes of operas as well as during the touching scenes of spoken tragedies. The goodbyes of Iphigenia to Clytemnestra never caused more tears to flow at the Hôtel de Bougogne[16] than did the recognition of Iphigenia and Orestes at the opera. Boileau could have said of the actress who, some years ago, created the character of Iphigenia in Duché's opera[17] what he said of the actress who created the same role in the tragedy of his friend.[18]

> *Jamais Iphigénie en Aulide immolée*
> *N'a coûté tant de pleurs à la Grèce assemblée,*
> *Que dans l'heureux spectacle à nos yeux étalé*
> *En a fait sous son nom verser la Champmeslé.*[19]

---

15 It is unclear whom Du Bos has in mind. Several later writers refer to a musician named Gaudimelle, but they all seem to have Du Bos as their source.

16 A former theatre, the first authorized theatre in Paris, built in 1548. It remained in use until 1783. Many classics of French theatre, including works by Racine, were premiered in this theatre.

17 *Iphigénie en Tauride* [Iphigenia in Tauris] (1704) with music by Henri Desmarets (1661–1741) and André Campra (1660–1744) and a libretto by François Duché de Vancy (1668–1704), French dramatist. In this period, the libretto was often considered the most important part of an opera, which is why Du Bos attributes the opera to Duché.

18 Du Bos refers to Boileau's friend Racine, and his play *Iphigenia*.

19 *Epîtres à Racine* [Letters to Racine]. Boileau, Epistle 7, 3–6:

> Never did Iphigenia immolated in Aulos
> Cost assembled Greece as many tears,
> As in the fortunate spectacle displayed to our eyes,
> She causes under the name la Chanmeslé.

Le Champmeslé was Marie Champmeslé (1642–1698), famous French actress.

In short, the senses are so pleased by the singing of the words, the harmony that accompanies them, the choruses, the symphonies, and the entire spectacle, that the soul, which is easily seduced by pleasure, becomes completely enchanted by a fiction, though the illusion is, so to speak, palpable. *Ex voluptate fides nascitur*.[20]

I speak of the bulk of people. Several people are too susceptible to music and pay attention only to the charms of melody, the richness of harmony, and demand that a composer sacrifice everything to these beauties. There are also people indifferent to music and whose ear is, if I may use this expression, so far from the heart that the most natural melodies do not touch them. It is right that they are bored at the opera. The art of the musician cannot compensate for the pleasure they lose due to the lack of *vraisemblance*. Lack of *vraisemblance* is a serious defect in a drama, but inevitable in an opera.

20 Attempts to trace the origin of this quotation beyond Du Bos have failed, but many subsequent writers quoted it, apparently taking it from Du Bos. "Belief is born from pleasure."

CHAPTER 47

Which Poetic Verses Are Best for Setting to Music.

After what has been said, I will venture to establish that, generally speaking, music is much more efficacious than plain declamation, and that music gives more power to poetic verse than does declamation when these verses are properly set to music. But it is absolutely necessary that all the verses be equally appropriate, and that the music is able to bring to them the same energy.

In speaking of poetic style, we said that it should express sentiments using simple terms. But that it should present us with all of the other objects which it treats using images and paintings. We have explained, in speaking of music, that music ought to imitate in its songs the tones, sighs, accents, and all the inarticulate vocal sounds that are natural signs of our sentiments and passions. It is very easy to infer from these two truths that verses that contain sentiments are very suitable for putting to music, but that those which contain images are not.

To put it another way, nature itself provides songs that are suitable for expressing sentiments. We could not passionately utter verses containing tender and touching sentiments without making sighing noises, without using accents and aspects of the voice that a man gifted with musical genius easily produces in melody. I am certain that Lully did not search for very long for the melody for these lines Medea sings in the opera *Theseus*:

> *Mon coeur auroit encore sa premiere innocence*
> *S'il n'avoit jamais eu d'amour*.[1]

There is more. The man of genius who composes using similar-sounding words finds that he has made songs that are varied, even without having thought about diversifying them. Each sentiment has its appropriate intonations, accents, and sighs. In this way, in composing vocal works, such as the ones we are speaking of here, the musician writes melodies that are as varied as nature itself.

1 *Théséé*, or *Theseus* (1675) is a tragic opera based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The music was composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully.

> My heart would again have its original innocence,
> If I had never been in love.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_051

Verses that contain pictures and images, and what we often call poetry *par excellence*, do not allow the musician to do a good job. Nature provides nearly nothing for expression. Art only helps the musician who intends to set to music lines such as those in which Corneille creates a magnificent picture of the triumvirate:

> *Le méchant par le prix au crime encouragé,*
> *Le mari dans son lit par sa femme égorgé:*
> *Le fils tout dégoutant du meurtre de son pere*
> *Et sa tête à la main demandant son salaire,*
> *Et cetera*[2]

In fact, the musician, obliged to set similar verses to music, could not find a lot of sources for his melody in the natural declamation of words. He needs to put more noble and imposing, rather than expressive, elements in his songs, and because nature is no help for him in varying his songs, otherwise they must become homogenous. Music adds almost no energy to poetic verses whose beauty consists in images, though their forcefulness is blunted by slowing down their pronunciation. As rich as his vein can be, a good lyric poet will rarely put poetic verses into his works that can rival the ones by Corneille that I have cited. This is why Quinault was criticized when he composed his first operas: his verses were denuded of the images and paintings that rendered poetry sublime. People regarded as a defect in his verses what constituted a merit. The French did not recognize the value of verses made to be set to music. Hitherto we had only composed songs, and since these little poems were designed only to express certain sentiments, they could not give occasion for the observations on lyric poetry that we have been able to make since. As soon as we began to write operas, the spirit of philosophy, which is excellent for revealing the truth, providing that it proceeds empirically, made us aware that verses replete with images, and generally speaking the most beautiful, are not best suited for successful music. There is no comparison between the two stanzas that I will cite below when they are read aloud. The first is from the opera *Theseus* written by Quinault:

---

2 This is from Corneille's *Cinna* 1.3, in a speech by Cinna about the conspiracy he fears.
> The villain whom the bribe to crime invites
> The husband murdered in bed by his wife
> The son covered in blood and stretching forth
> His father's dead, demands for the impious deed
> His promised recompense.

(Translation adapted from Nugent, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music*, 388.)

Doux repos, innocence paix,
Heureux, heureux un coeur qui ne vous perds jamais
L'impitoyable amour m'a toujours poursuivie,
N'étoit-ce point assez des maux qu'il m'avoit faits?
Pourquoi ce Dieu cruel avec de nouveaux traits,
Vient-il encore troubler le rest de ma vie?[3]

The second is from *The Idyll of Sceaux* by Racine:

Déja grondoient les horribles tonnerres
Par qui sont brisés les remparts,
Déja marchoit devant les étendarts
Bellone les cheveux épars,
Et se flattoit d'éternifier les guerres
Que ses fureurs souffloient de toutes partes.[4]

---

3 Quinault, *Opera of Theseus*:
Sweet peace and innocent repose
How blessed is he who takes your charms!
Whose heart no cares can decompose
Nor bitter jealousy alarm.
But I alas! am doomed to spend
my days and nights deprived of rest;
Pursued by plagues that ever attend
A miserable love-sick breast.
(Translation adapted from Nugent, *Critical Reflections*, 389–390.)

4 The *Idyll of Sceaux*, 25–30. This work, also known as the *Idylle sur la Paix* [Idyll on Peace], is a musical composition written by Lully using Racine's poem. It was first presented at the Chateau of Sceaux on July 16 1685:
Now the dreadful cannons rumbling
Roll their thunder through the sky
Now the lofty ramparts tumbling
All in shattered ruins lie.
Fierce Bellona scattering terror
Round the embattled legions flew,
Clad in adamantine armour,
Deep imbrued with purple hue.
Hissing snakes her hair intertwining
Filled the skies with poisoned breath,
With the cruel goddess joining
In her bloody schemes of death.
(Translated by Nugent, *Critical Reflections*, 390.)

Quite obviously these two stanzas are not equally successful when set to music. Thirty people can remember the first for every one that can remember the second. However, both were set to music by Lully, who had ten more years of experience when he composed the *Idyll of Sceaux*. The first expresses natural sentiments of a heart inflamed with new passion. There enters only the simplest image, that of love that devotes its attention to Medea. Racine's poetic verses contain the most magnificent images that poetry can achieve. Whoever can forget for a moment the effect these verses make when they are sung will reasonably prefer Racine to Quinault.

Generally today, we agree that Quinault's lyric verses are well suited for being set to music for the same reason they were criticized at the beginning of opera: I want to say because of the poetic character of their style. It is necessary to grant that these verses are well suited for musical treatment, or by the arrangement of words regarded as simple sounds.

CHAPTER 48

Of Prints and Prose Stories.

I would happily compare prints, which have all of a picture except the colours, to prose novels, which have the invention and style of poetry. Novels are almost metreed and rhymed poems. The inventions of prints and of prose stories are equally fortunate. Prints endlessly multiply the pictures of the great masters. They put them within reach of people who would otherwise have been unable to experience them, due to their remoteness. With the assistance of a print, the greatest beauties that Raphael painted on the walls of the Vatican can be seen in Paris. Even an individual person can put in his room all of the spirit and artistry found in masterpieces whose beauties had seemed restricted to the rooms of princes, or to those who, by means of finance, are as rich as princes. Similarly, we owe to prose stories several works full of simultaneously *vraisemblable* and marvellous stories. They have precepts, both wise and practical, that would never have seen the light of day if their author had had to subject their genius to rhyme and metre. The authors of *The Princess of Cleves*[1] and *Telemachus* would never have given us these works if they had been required to write in verse. There are beautiful poems without verse, just as there are beautiful verses without poetry and beautiful paintings without rich colouration.

The ability to colour does not make someone a painter and one does not know how to paint only insofar as one knows how to colour. This is to make a claim in place of offering a proof. It is a question that I believe should remain unresolved. I will explain.

1 French title: *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) was published anonymously, but the author is widely believed to be Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, Countess de La Fayette (1634–1693). This early prose work is regarded as one of the first psychological novels and a great masterpiece.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_052

CHAPTER 49

That It Is Useless to Dispute If the Elements of Design and Expression Are Preferable to That of Colour.

Perfection of design and colouration are real things about which we can agree or disagree with the help of a compass or a standard. Thus, intelligent people converse among themselves about the status that Le Brun has among designers and draughtsmen, just as they do about the rank Titian has among colourists. But if the question is whether Le Brun is preferable to Titian, in other words, if the poetic and expressive element of a composition is preferable to the element of colour, and which of these elements is superior to the other, I hold that it is useless to ask this question. People with opposing views can never agree on the question of pre-eminence, which they always judge on the basis of their own tastes. Whether one is more or less sensitive to colour or pictorial poetry, we can place the colourist above the poet, or the poet above the colourist. For us, the greatest painter is the one whose works give us the greatest pleasure.

People are not affected equally by colour, nor by expression. In other words, there are those who have a more voluptuous eye than others. Their eyes are better organized in the sense that the harmony and truth of colours excite in them a more vivid sentiment than is excited in the eyes of others. Another person, whose eyes are not so fortunately formed but whose heart is more sensitive than the former, receives more pleasure from touching expression than from harmony and accuracy of local colours.[1] Not all people have the same delicacy. Some will have a better sense of sight compared to the other senses. This is why some prefer Poussin to Titian, while others prefer Titian to Poussin.

Those who judge without reflecting will suppose that objects inwardly affect others just as they are affected by them. Someone who defends the superiority of Poussin cannot conceive that a poet, whose inventions give him a pleasurable sentiment, could be ranked above an artist, whose harmony and riches leave him with only a moderate pleasure. On his part, an admirer of Titian complains about an admirer of Poussin for preferring a painter who lacks the ability to charm the eyes, and he judges that some of Poussin's creations do

1 Local colour, as previously mentioned, is the natural colour of objects unaffected by shadow, light or reflections, which is why a person with poor eyesight would be less affected by it.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_053

not much affect people since he is only moderately moved. Thus, every person supposes that it is a decided question that the part of painting that pleases him most is the part of the art that it must have above the others. In following the same principle, some men find themselves with the opposite view. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*.[2] They would be right if everyone were content to judge for himself. Their mistake is to want to judge on everyone's behalf. But men naturally believe that their taste is good taste, and as a result they think that people who do not judge as they do have defective organs, or that they allow prejudices to govern them without being aware of the power of bias.

Whoever wants to make someone change their sentiments towards things purely based on taste must change their organs. In other words, everyone can remain in their opinion without blaming others' opinions. To want to persuade a man who prefers colour to expression, in accordance with his own feelings, that he is wrong, is to want to persuade him to take more pleasure in seeing Poussin's paintings than Titian's. The matter depends no more on him than it does on a man, whose palate is formed in such a way as to prefer champagne to Spanish wine, to change his taste and prefer the Spanish wine to French.

The predilection that makes us give preference to one part of painting over another does not depend on our reason, any more than the predilection that makes us prefer one genre of poetry over others. This predilection depends on our taste, and our taste depends on our make-up, our present inclinations, and our state of mind. When our taste changes, it is not because we were persuaded to change it, but because a physiological change happened in us. True, often the changes in us were unnoticeable, and we can only realize they occurred upon reflection, since they happened unnoticeably, little by little. Age and many other causes produce big changes in us. A sad passion makes us love books that currently match our present state of mind. As soon as we are consoled, we change our taste. The man who as a child found more pleasure in reading Fontaine's *Fables* than Racine's tragedies now has a preference for those tragedies at thirty. I say 'to prefer' and 'to better love,' and not 'to praise and blame,' since in preferring reading Racine's tragedies to Fontaine's fables, we do not blame and at the same time continue to love those fables. At the age of sixty, the man of whom I speak will prefer Molière's comedies, since they display the world that he has seen, and provide frequent occasion to reflect on what he has observed over the course of his life. He will no longer prefer Racine's tragedies, for which he once had such a taste when he was filled with the passions depicted in those plays. But these particular tastes do not prevent

2 Virgil, *Eclogues* 2.65: "Each is led by his liking."

men from paying justice to good authors, nor from discerning those which are successful even in a genre for which they have no predilection. We will take this up at greater length at the end of the second part of this work.

CHAPTER 50

Of Sculpture, of the Talent That It Requires and of the Art of Bas-relief.

All that we have said concerning the structure and expression of pictures can also be applied to sculpture. The chisel is capable of imitation and, in the hands of a person of genius, it knows how to engage us nearly as much as the paintbrush. True, one can be a good sculptor without having as much invention as is needed to be an excellent painter. But if artistry is not as necessary to a sculptor, the sculptor can make use of it to set himself above his contemporaries. We see from several works of sculpture that, in the hands of a person of genius, sculpture is capable of matching the noblest achievements of painting. An example is the *History of Niobe*[1] consisting of fourteen or fifteen statutes linked by a common narrative. The masterful remains of this antique work are to be seen in Rome at the Medici Villa. The group *Alexander Wounded and Supported by his Soldiers* was another example. The *Pasquin*[2] and the *Belvedere Torso*[3] are from this group. Speaking of modern sculpture, examples include the Tomb of Cardinal Richelieu,[4] the *Rape of Proserpine* by Girardon[5] the *Fountain of Navona*,[6]

1 These twelve (not fourteen or fifteen, as Du Bos says) sculptures were discovered in 1583 in Rome, near Porta San Giovanni, and are Roman copies of Greek originals. They were acquired by Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici. In Greek mythology, Niobe, a mother of fourteen children, laughed at the goddess Latona, who had only two. Latona had her children (Artemis and Apollo) attack Niobe's children. In some versions of the myth, all of the children are killed; in others, a boy and a girl escape. According to Ovid, Niobe was transformed into a marble block. Today the sculptures are in the Uffizi.

2 A Hellenistic sculpture excavated in the 15th century in Rome, also known as the *Pasquino*, and located in the Piazza Pasquino, Rome. *Pasquin* is a 'talking statue:' there is a tradition of posting political criticisms on the base of the statue. It is thought to represent Menelaus. Neither it nor the *Belvedere Torso* are any longer thought to be part of a group depicting Alexander wounded and supported by his soldiers.

3 A fragment of an ancient statue, now in the Vatican. Likely from the 1st century BC or the 1st century AD, it is probably a Roman copy of an older, Greek statue. The subject of the statue remains a topic of debate.

4 A work (1694) by François Giaradon (1628–1715), French sculptor. Located in the Church of the Sorbonne, Paris, it represents the great French statesman.

5 Girardon's *Rape of Proserpine* was made for the Gardens at Versailles. Proserpine (or Proserpina) was a Roman goddess whose myths were based on those of Persephone, the corresponding Greek goddess. She was abducted by Hades, king of the Underworld.

6 *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* [Fountain of the Four Rivers] (designed 1651) by Gian Lorenzo

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_054

and the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*[7] by Bernini, as well as Algardi's bas-relief[8] representing St. Peter and St. Paul in the air, threatening Attila, who is coming to sack Rome. This bas-relief serves as the one of the small altarpieces in the Basilica of St. Peter.

I do not know whether less genius is required to draw from marble a work similar to *Attila* than to paint it on canvas. Indeed, the artistry and expressiveness are as touching as those found in Raphael's picture of the same subject.[9] The craftsmanship of the sculptor seems to have achieved *chiaroscuro* with a chisel and appears to me of greater merit than the painter's. The figures at the front of this superb piece are in nearly full relief. They are genuine statues. Those at the back are in lower relief, and their features are more or less defined, depending on how far back they are. Finally, the composition is completed by several figures carved into the surface of the marble using simple lines. I do not praise Algardi for having taken the initial idea for this work from his own genius, nor for being the inventor of the great art of bas-relief. But I praise him a lot for having perfected, in the work at issue here, an art already discovered by the moderns.

On the basis of the pieces of Greek and Roman sculpture that remain, we conclude that the art of bas-relief was well known among the ancients. Their sculptors only knew how to cut off half or a third of figures sculpted in the round and stick them, so to speak, on a bas-relief foundation without those in the background being deprived of light. A tower that appears five hundred steps removed from the front of the bas-relief, judging by the size of a soldier standing on the tower relative to the figures at the front of the design, is sketched as if seen from fifty feet away. The joints in the stone can be clearly seen and the tiles of the roofing can be counted. This is not how objects present themselves to us in nature. Objects do not merely appear smaller in proportion to their distance from us. When they are at a certain distance, they are also blurred because of the interposition of a mass of air. Modern sculptors, better instructed in this

---

Bernini is located in Piazza Navona, Rome. It represents four rivers (the Nile, the Danube, the Ganges, and the Rio de la Plata), each corresponding to a continent subject to the Pope's authority (Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas). Bernini (1598–1680), Italian sculptor and architect, considered one of the greatest sculptors of all time.

7 Widely considered one of Bernini's greatest works, this sculpture (1652) represents the mystic St. Teresa of Avila undergoing an experience of religious ecstasy, her heart about to be pierced by a spear wielded by an angel. It is located in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

8 Alessandro Algardi (1598–1654), Italian baroque sculptor, active in Rome. Du Bos refers to the *Fuga d'Attila*. In the foreground, Pope Leo confronts Attila, pointing to two heavenly figures coming to his aid.

9 *The Meeting of Leo the Great and Attila* (1514), in the Vatican.

matter than the ancients, blur the features of objects in the distance of a bas-relief and, in doing so, observe the aerial perspective.[10] In two or three inches of a relief, they make figures who appear to be fully rounded and others who seem sunk in the distance. We are made to see landscapes artfully put in perspective by diminishing strokes, not only making them smaller, but also less distinct. Blurring things in the distance produces almost the same effect as reducing colour contrast does in a picture. Thus, the ancients had not perfected the art of bas-relief to the degree that it is perfected today, though antique bas-reliefs do contain some admirable figures. For example, there are the *Dancers* in the Louvre, copied from an antique bas-relief found in Rome.[11] Able sculptors have prized this as an object to be studied.

In my opinion, Leo's payment to Algardi for his bas-relief (thirty thousand crowns) was not excessive. If I were not afraid of boring my reader, I would also demonstrate that the Cavalier Bernini and Girardon have put as much artistry into their works as Algardi. Of all of Bernini's creations, I will only mention a feature that he has placed in the Fountain of the Piazza Navona to express a particular fact about the course of the Nile (that its source is unknown) and that, as Lucan said, nature did not want us to see this river as a mere brook.

> *Arcanum natura caput non protulit ulli,*
> *Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre*.[12]

Bernini made the statue that represents the Nile recognizable as such by giving it the attributes that the ancients assigned to the river and its head is covered in a veil. This idea is not found in antiquity and originated with this sculptor. It is an ingenious way to express the failure of a large number of attempts, ancient and modern, to discover the source of the Nile by following its course. Bernini's allegory nobly states that the Nile wishes to conceal its source. This was commonly believed in Rome during the pontificate of Innocent X,[13] when Bernini made the fountain. True, learned people must already have known of

10 The use of aerial perspective involves representing distant objects as indistinct and less vivid in colour.

11 Du Bos seems to refer to an engraving of *Les Danseuses Borghese* by Pietro Santi Bartoli (1693). The ancient, so-called, *Les Danseuses Borghese* is believed to be a 2nd century copy of an earlier work, made by a Neo-Attic workshop and produced for the Roman market. It was very famous in the 17th century. The sculpture was acquired by the Louvre in 1807.

12 Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 10.295–296:

> Nature has not brought forth your source to anyone
> nor has it permitted people to see you, Nile, a stream.

13 Giovanni Battista Pamphili, Innocent X (1574–1655), pope from 1644 until his death.

the discoveries of Manuel de Almeida[14] and Jerónimo Lobo,[15] though the history of upper Ethiopia by Teles, the first to present these discoveries to the public, had not yet been published. It only appeared six years after the death of Innocent X [Printed at Coimbra in 1661].[16] But the careful reports that the Portuguese Jesuits had sent to Rome, and what those who had returned to Europe recounted, must have already apprised the learned about how the sources of the Nile had finally been discovered in Abyssinia [*Historia geral de Etiopia a Alta*, ch. 6].

Marvellous events are still believable by poets of all types, a long time after they have ceased to be believed by historians and other writers whose primary goal is the truth. I even think that with regard to many beliefs in physics, astronomy, and geography, painters, poets, and sculptors ought to stick to opinions commonly held in their time, even if the learned have good grounds for rejecting them. So, according to the poet, the flight of the swallow who skims the earth is a timid flight, even though this flight is very daring, according to Borelli[17] and other learned people who have studied the movement of animals. The female of a beehive must be [according to artists] the king of the swarm, and they will continue to attribute to this supposed king without a sting everything ingenious that has been said about him. I do not deny that as truths become more common with time, poets must adopt them one day. But it is not up to them to establish common beliefs or to offend the common opinion, unless they write the kind of poem that we call a didactic poem.

End of Book One

14 Manuel de Almeida (1580–1646), Jesuit missionary and ambassador to the Emperor of Ethiopia. De Almeida wrote a *Historia de Etiopia a Alta ou Abassia* [History of High Ethiopia or Abyssia]. It was not published in his lifetime but Baltasar Teles appropriated and revised a good deal of material from de Almeida in a work that appeared in 1660.

15 Jerónimo Lobo (1595–1678), Portuguese Jesuit missionary to Ethiopia. His *Itinerário* is an important source of information about Ethiopia. It was not published during his lifetime, but Teles drew upon this work in his 1660 publication.

16 Baltasar Teles (1596–1675), Portuguese historian. His *Historia geral de Etiopia a Alta* [General History of High Ethiopia] appeared in 1660, not 1661 as Du Bos states.

17 Giovanni Alfonso Borelli (1608–1679), Italian physicist and physiologist. Borelli is considered the father of biomechanics and presented his works in *De Motu Animalium* [Motions of Animals] (1680–1681).

BOOK 2

CHAPTER 1

Of Genius in General.

The sublimity[1] of poetry and painting is to touch and please, just as that of eloquence is to persuade. It is not enough that your verses be beautiful, said Horace in the capacity of a legislator, in order to give more weight to his verdict. It is necessary that these verses be able to move hearts and give birth to the sentiments that they intend to excite.

> *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto*
> *Et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto*.[2]

Horace would have said the same thing to painters.

A poem, like a painting, would not produce this effect if it has no other merits than execution that follows the rules and elegance. The best executed painting and the most balanced and well-written poem can be cold and boring works. So it is necessary that a work that touches us have, if it is a painting, elegance of design and realistic colours. Or, if it is poem, richness of versification that acts to give existence to objects capable, by themselves, of moving us and giving us pleasure. *Ars enim cum a natura profecta fit, nisi natura moveat et delectet, nihil sane egisse videatur* [Cicero, *Orat*. bk. 3].[3]

If the characters and stories of a tragic poet's heroes do not engage me, his work will bore me even though it is well-written and even though it does not violate what we call the rules of theatre. But if the poet narrates stories, if he shows me situations and characters that engage me as much as those of Pyrrhus and Pauline,[4] his works make me cry. I recognize the poet as an artist who toys with my heart and as a man who knows how to make something divine.

---

1 The notion of the sublime was reintroduced to 17th and 18th century aesthetics by way of a French translation of *On the sublime*, originally written by Longinus (fl. 1st century AD). See the Introduction for details.

2 Horace, *Art of poetry* 99–100: "Not enough is it for poems to have beauty: they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will." Quintus Horatius Flaccus, usually known simply as Horace (65–68 BC), the leading Roman lyric poet of his time.

3 Cicero, *Orator* 3.51.197: "For as art started from nature, it would certainly be deemed to have failed if it had not a natural power of affecting us and giving us pleasure." Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), Roman orator, statesman and philosopher.

4 Du Bos refers to Pyrrhus, a character in Racine's *Andromache*. This play is set in the aftermath of the Trojan War; Pyrrhus is murdered by Orestes. He also refers to Paulina, a character

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_056

Ille per extensum funem mihi posse videtur
ire poeta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
irritat, mulcet falsis terroribus implet.
[Horace, *Ep*. bk. 2][5]

The resemblance between the idea that the poet draws from his genius and the ideas that people could have who find themselves in a situation in which the poet places his characters, plus the capacity of the images to be moving that he has formed prior to taking up his pen or paintbrush, are the greatest merits of poems, as they are the greatest merits of pictures. The intentions of the painter or the poet, the inventiveness of ideas and images able to move us that they use to realize their intentions, distinguish the great artist from the ordinary craftsman, who often surpasses the great artist in execution. The greatest versifiers are not the greatest poets, just as designers who are best at following the rules are not the greatest painters.

One cannot for long study the works of the great masters without grasping that they do not regard regularity and the beauties of fine workmanship as the final goal of their art. Rather, they regard these as means to endowing their works with beauties of a higher order.

They have followed the rules in order to win over our minds by constantly sustained *vraisemblance* that is able to make them forget that a fiction softens our hearts. The elegance of the surface and the charms of language have given a work marvels of execution, in order to predispose us towards their characters. They have intended to focus our attention on objects destined to touch our souls. This is the goal of the orator, when he follows the precepts of grammar and rhetoric. His final goal is not to be praised for the correctness and brilliance of his composition, two things that do not persuade. Rather, his goal is to make us share his sentiments by his arguments or by the poignancy of the images that his imagination supplies. His art teaches him only the structure of these arguments and images.

So, in order to create, it is necessary to be born with genius and only a long period of study can assist genius in creating successfully. A man who creates poorly, who produces without judgement, does not deserve the name of a creator. *Ego porro ne invenisse quidem credo eum, qui non iudicavit*, said Quintilian

---

in Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1634). Paulina is distressed when her husband Polyeucte converts to Christianity and is martyred. She subsequently converts. Jean Racine (1639–1699), one of the greatest French playwrights.

5 Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.210–212: "methinks that poet is able to walk a tight rope, who with airy nothings wrings my heart, inflames, soothes, fills it with vain alarms."

[*Inst. Orat.* bk. 3. ch. 3][6] in speaking of inventiveness. Rules, already reduced to a method, are the signs that only indicate the road from afar. Only with the assistance of experience do the most fortunate geniuses learn from them how to apply in practice the succinct maxims of these laws and their overly general precepts. Always engage the passions, say the rules, and never let your viewers or listeners languish. These are great maxims, but the person born without genius understands nothing of the precepts that they contain. The most fortunate genius does not become capable of applying them in a day. It is necessary to address here genius and the studies that shape painters and poets.

If our artists lack the divine enthusiasm that makes painters poets and poets painters; if they do not have, as Perrault said,

> *… ce feu, cette divine flame,*
> *L'esprit de notre esprit, et l'ame de notre ame.*[7]

they both remain all their lives menial labourers and craftsmen. They must be given their daily wages, but they do not deserve the respect and rewards that cultivated nations owe to illustrious artists. They are the people of whom Cicero said, *Quorum operae non quorum artes emuntur* [*On Duties* bk. 1].[8] What they know of their profession is only a formula that they have learned, as one learns other crafts. Ordinary minds are [only] capable of being mediocre painters and poets.

Genius is the aptitude that a person has received from nature to make certain things easily and well, things that others can only make very poorly and by taking great pains. We learn with as much ease as we learn to speak our native language how to make things for which we have a genius.

A person born with a genius for military command and capable, with the assistance of experience, of becoming a great captain, is a person whose natural makeup is such that his courage does not detract from his presence of mind and whose presence of mind does not detract from his courage. He is a person gifted with sound judgement and a quick imagination. He retains the free use

---

6 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 3.3.5: "For my part, I cannot believe that a person who has not made a judgement has performed the act of 'invention' either." Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, usually known in English as Quintilian, (ca. AD 35–ca. 100), Roman rhetorician and author.

7 *Le Génie. Épistre a Fontenelle* [Genius. Letter to Fontenelle].
> … this fire, this divine flame,
> The spirit of our spirit, and the soul of our soul.

Charles Perrault (1626–1703), member of the Académie française and author; best known for fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Cinderella*.

8 Cicero, *On Duties* 1.42.150: "whose labour not whose arts are purchased."

of these two faculties in the hot blooded state that comes after the cold into which the first sight of great danger throws the human heart, as heat comes after cold while in the grip of a fever. In the zeal that makes him forget the danger, he sees, he deliberates, and selects his option as if he were quietly in his tent. He discovers in a glance the dangerous manoeuvres his enemy makes, manoeuvres that officers older than him will study for a long time before they see the motive behind them, or their faults.

One does not acquire the disposition of mind of which I speak. One never has it if one did not have it at birth. The dread of death daunts those who are not excited by the sight of the enemy and those who are too excited lose the presence of mind so necessary for seeing clearly what is happening and discovering what should be done. Whatever brains a man has when his blood is cool, he will not be a good general if the appearance of the enemy makes him either hot headed or timorous. This is why so many people who reason so well concerning war in their studies perform so poorly in the field. This is why so many people go to war all of their lives without becoming capable of command.

I am well aware that honour and emulation [of others] often causes timorous people to take the same measures and steps as those who are born brave. In the same way, the most impetuous obey the officer who forbids them to advance to where their courage calls them. But people do not have the same command over their imaginations as they have over their limbs. Military discipline can keep the hot headed in his ranks, and keep the timorous at his post. But it could not prevent the interior of either from being shaken, to help myself to one of Montaigne's[9] expressions, or prevent the soul of one from advancing while the soul of the other retreats.[10] Neither of them is capable of having, in the face of danger, that freedom of mind and imagination that even the Roman would praise in Hannibal. *Plurimum consilii inter ipsa pericula erat* [Livy, bk. 21].[11] This is what we call being a general in combat.

All professions are like the soldier's. The management of important affairs, the art of assigning people to the tasks for which they were born, medicine, and even gaming, all have a genius. Nature has distributed its abilities among

---

9 Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), one of the most prominent French philosophers of his time. He is known primarily for his *Essais* [Essays] (1580).

10 Michel de Montaigne, "Chapter 54—Of Vain Subtleties," in *Montaigne's Essays*, trans. Charles Cotton (1877): "And therefore it is that I, for my own part, retreat as much as I can towards the first and natural station, whence I so vainly attempted to advance."

11 Livy, *History of Rome* 21.4.5: "Best judgement in the midst of dangers." Hannibal (247–ca. 181 BC), Carthaginian general, one of the greatest military commanders of all time, defeated Roman armies on many occasions. Latin text corrected.

people in order to render them necessary to each other since the needs of people is the first bond of society.[12] Thus, nature has chosen to give the aptitude to do certain things to some people that are impossible for others, and these latter have been given an aptitude for other things, a facility that is denied to the former. The first have a sublime and extensive genius in a certain sphere. The others have in that sphere the ability to apply themselves and the gift of attention, so suited for dealing with details. If the former are necessary to the latter as their leaders, the latter are necessary to the former as their craftsmen. Nature has unequally divided its goods between its children, but it has disinherited no one. A person entirely deprived of any sort of talent is as rare as a universal genius. People without any intelligence are as rare as monsters, said the person with the greatest reputation in the profession of teaching children. *Hebetes vero et indociles non magis secundum naturam homines eduntur, quam prodigiosa corpora et monstris insignia* [Quint. bk. 1. ch. 2].[13]

It even seems that providence intended to make certain talents and certain inclinations more common among a certain people than among other peoples. This is to establish between nations the reciprocal dependence that providence has taken care to establish between individual people. The needs that commit individuals to entering into a society with one another also commit nations to binding themselves into a society. Thus, providence desires that nations form an agreement with each other to exchange talents and skills, just as they exchange the various fruits of their countries. This is in order that they reciprocally exchange, for the same reason that individuals join together to form a people: the desire for well-being or the longing to be better off.

From the diversity of geniuses comes the diversity of human inclinations. Nature has taken the precaution of leading people to the employments for which it has intended them. They are led with more or less force, depending on whether they have more or fewer obstacles to overcome to render themselves capable of fulfilling their intended vocation. People's inclinations are so different only because they all have the same impulse, namely the impetus of their genius.

---

12 There are echoes in Du Bos' account of the Epicurean theory of society. According to Epicurus (341–270 BC) and his followers, humans were originally solitary, but came together first as families and then as communities to meet basic human needs. See Epicurus, *On Nature* 5.925–1457.

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.1.2: "Dull and unteachable persons are no more normal products of human nature than prodigious and monstrous births." Citation corrected.

Castor gaudet equis, ovo prognatus eodem
pugnis; quot capitum vivunt, totidem studiorum
milia.
[Horat. *Sat*. bk. 2][14]

Where does this difference come from? Ask, says the same philosopher, the genius of each person. Only it can explain. Each individual person has his own genius and it does not resemble those of others. They are even as different as white and black.

Scit Genius, natale comes qui temperat astrum,
naturae deus humanae, mortalis in unum
quodque caput, voltu mutabilis, albus et ater.
[*Ep*. 2. bk. 2][15]

This is what makes a poet please without following the rules while another displeases but follows them. *In quibusdam virtutes non habent gratiam, in quibusdam vitia ipsa delectant* [Quintil. *Instit*. bk. 2. Ch. 3].[16] The characteristics that people have from birth make some please even by means of their defects while others displease by their good qualities.

My subject does not permit me to speak at greater length about the difference we find between the geniuses of people and even between the geniuses of nations. Those who would like their natural instinct for understanding people to be taught and perfected can read Huarte's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias*[17] and the *Portrait du caractere des hommes, des siècles et des nations*,

14 Horace, *Satires* 2.1.26–29: "Castor finds joy in horses; his brother, born from the same egg, in boxing. For every thousand living souls, there are as many thousand tastes."

15 Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.187–189. The preceding lines are a paraphrase of Horace's Latin. "Why so, the Genius alone knows—that companion who rules our star of birth, the god of human nature, though mortal for each single life, and changing in countenance, white or black."

16 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.178: "In some people, excellences have no charms; in some, their very faults are delightful."

17 Juan Huarte de San Juan also known as Juan Huarte y Navarro (1529–1588), Spanish physician and pioneering psychologist. *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575), translated into English by Richard Carew as *The Examination of Men's Wits* (1594), earned Huarte a European reputation. The book is remarkably advanced for its time and links psychology and physiology. In this chapter, Du Bos draws extensively on Huarte's theories. Huarte held, for example, that each person has a unique talent.

by Barclay.[18] It can be learned from reading these books, though they do not deserve the complete trust of the reader. Here I must speak only of the genius that makes painters and poets.

18 Du Bos refers to *Icon Armonium* (1614), translated into English as *The Mirrour of Mindes, or Barclay's Icon Armonium* (1631), by John Barclay (1582–1621), Scottish poet, satirist, and writer. Du Bos drew on Barclay in this chapter. Barclay held that each individual has a unique genius and he also attributes a genius to each nation.

CHAPTER 2

Of the Genius That Makes Painters and Poets.

I imagine that the genius of the arts of the painter and poet consists in a fortunate arrangement of the organs of the brain, in a good formation of each of these organs, and in the quality of blood that inclines it to agitate during work, in such a way that it provides a lot of spirits to the springs that perform the functions of the imagination. Indeed, the extreme weariness and exhaustion that often follow a long mental struggle makes apparent that works of the imagination involve a great expenditure of bodily strength. I suppose that the blood of those who create is heated since painters and poets cannot create in cold blood. It is well known that they are embraced by a sort of enthusiasm which produces their ideas. Aristotle even speaks of a poet who never composed better than when his poetic fervour amounted almost to a frenzy.[1] Tasso only gave birth to those admirable pictures of Arminda and Clorinda[2] at the cost of a disposition to real insanity, into which he fell towards the end of his life. Apollo has his drunkenness as well as Bacchus.[3] Do you believe, asked Cicero, that Pacuvius[4] composed in cold blood? That could not be. It is necessary to be inspired by a species of fervor in order to create beautiful verse.

> *Pacuvium putatis in scribendo leni animo ac remisso fuisse? Fieri nullo modo potuit. Saepe enim audivi poetam bonum neminem* [...] *sine inflammatione animorum exsistere posse et sine quodam adflatu quasi furoris.*
>
> [*Orat.* bk. 3][5]

1 More correctly it is Plato who claims that poets are at their best when consumed by a kind of madness, since this is when they are divinely inspired by the Muses. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 245a: "And a third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations." According to Aristotle, one type of poet composes out of madness, but he does not weigh in on the quality of the work produced. See *Poetics* 1455a: "And that is why poetry needs either a sympathetic nature or a madman, the former being impressionable and the latter inspired (*manikos*)."

2 Characters in *Jerusalem Liberated*.

3 Bacchus, or Dionysius as he was known in Greece, was the ancient god of (among other things) wine and ritual madness.

4 Marcus Pacuvius (220–ca. 130 BC), Roman tragedian, considered the greatest of his era. Cicero praises Pacuvius in *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, 1.

5 Cicero, *Orator* 2.193–194: "Do you really think that Pacuvius, when he wrote it, was in a calm

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_057

But the most fortunate agitation of the blood will only produce bizarre chimeras in a brain that is either vicious or poorly disposed, and consequently incapable of representing to the poet nature as it appears to other people. The copies that it makes of nature do not resemble it because its mirror is not, so to speak, faithful. Sometimes creeping along the ground, sometimes in the clouds, if it is sometimes in contact with reality this is only by accident. Such artists include the author of the poem of the Magdalene and the author of the poem about St. Louis.[6] They were two dynamic minds, but they were never faithful to nature because they copied the empty figments created by their fevered imaginations. Both were equally removed from reality, though they were separated from it in different ways.

On the other hand, if a well-composed mind lacks the fire that produced blood hot and full of spirits, its products will be rule-governed but they will be cold.

> *Impetus ille sacer, qui vatum pectora nutrit*.
> [Ovid, *From the Black*. bk. 4. Eleg. 2][7]

If he is sometimes animated by poetic fire, it is soon extinguished and it only emits a flickering light. This is why we say that a smart person can very well write a couplet, but he must be a poet in order to write three. Those who are not poets become short of breath when they must climb Parnassus.[8] They have a glimpse of what they ought to make their characters say, but they do not clearly grasp it and still less can they express it. They remain cold while striving to be touching. *Nervi deficiunt animique*.[9]

When the quality of blood is united with a fortunate arrangement of the organs, this favourable union forms, to my mind, a poetic or pictorial genius.

---

and careless frame of mind? That could never be. For I have often heard that … no man can be a good poet who is not on fire with passion, and inspired by something very like frenzy."

6 Du Bos refers to *La Louenge des Rois de France* (1507) by André de La Vigne (ca. 1470–1526), French poet and chronicler, and *Magdaléïde ou Madeleine au désert de la Ste-Baume* (1668; reprinted 1714), by Pierre de Saint-Louis (1626–1684), French writer of religious poetry. Despite its title, La Vigne's book is primarily about Louis XII. De Saint-Louis's book had a cameo in the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. Some believed that it rivalled Homer's *Iliad*.

7 Ovid, *Letters from the Black Sea* [Ex Ponto] 4.2.25: "That holy impulse which nourishes poets' mouths." Quotation corrected. Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC–AD 17/18), prominent Roman poet. He is best known for his *Metamorphoses*.

8 Mount Parnassus was, in Greek mythology, the home of the muses. It is the figurative home of great artists.

9 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 26–27: "Force and spirits fail."

Now, I distrust physical explanations, since the imperfection of this science almost always makes guesswork necessary. But the facts that I have stated are certain and these facts, though we do not have a clear explanation of them, are sufficient for my theory. Thus I imagine that this fortunate arrangement is, physically speaking, the divinity that poets say is in their breasts and animates them.

> *Est deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo:*
> *impetus hic sacrae semina mentis habet.*
> [Ovid, *Fast*. bk. 1][10]

This is what divine furvour, of which the ancients spoke, consists in. A modern wrote a learned treatise on this subject forty-five years ago [Petitus, *On poetic fury*].[11] This is what makes Montaigne say,

> The poetic sallies that ravish and transport the author out of himself, why should we not attribute them to his good fortune, since the poet himself confesses they exceed his capacity and acknowledges them to proceed from something else than himself, and that he has does not have them in his power .... It is the same in painting, where touches shall sometimes slip from the hand of the painter, so surpassing both his fancy and his art as to beget his own admiration and astonishment.
> [*Essays*. bk. 1. ch. 23][12]

This fortune is that of being born with genius. Genius is the fire that raises painters above themselves, which makes them put their soul into their designs and emotion into their works. It is the enthusiasm that possesses poets when they see the graces dancing in a meadow when ordinary people only see flocks. This is why their talent is not always under their control. This is why they sometimes seem to lose their minds and why sometimes it seems to, in the words of Horace, *pull them by the ear*,[13] obliging them to write or paint. As we shall reveal at greater length in the course of these reflections, the genius must feel all of

---

10 Ovid, *Book of days* 6.5–6: "There is a god within us. It is when he stirs us that our bosom warms; it is his impulse that sows the seeds of inspiration."

11 Petrus Petitus, also known as Pierre Petit (1617–1687), French physician, philosopher, poet, and polymath. Among his large number of books is *Dissertatio de furore poetico* [Dissertation on poetic fury] (1683) which gives a physicalist explanation of poetic genius.

12 Montaigne, *Essays* 1.23.

13 Du Bos seems to have attributed to Horace a passage from Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.3–5:

the alterations to which our machine is subjected by several unknown causes. Those painters and poets are fortunate who have more control over their genius than others have. They leave their enthusiasm behind when they quit work, and do not take into company the drunkenness of Parnassus.

Experience decisively shows that not all men are born with the genius to become painters or poets. We see people that the labour of several years, continued with obstinacy rather than with perseverance, could not raise above the rank of poetasters. We have even seen intelligent people who, having copied several times something very sublime that painting has produced, become old with paintbrush and palette in hand, without rising above the level of mediocre colourists and servile copiers of others' designs.

People who are born with the genius that makes them great generals or magistrates worthy of writing laws often die before their talents become known. The person endowed with such a genius could not display it without being called to positions for which his genius makes him suitable and he often dies before they have been entrusted to him. Even supposing that chance has caused him to be born just beyond reach of these positions, and that it is impossible to obtain them in the course of a human life, he often lacks the talent to obtain them. Capable of doing well in these positions, he is incapable of negotiating the route by which, in his time, one obtains them. Genius is nearly always accompanied by haughtiness. I do not speak of the haughtiness that consists in a tone of voice and a set of the head: this sort of haughtiness is only an arrogance that marks out a small mind. This makes a person more contemptible in the eyes of philosophers than a lackey dressed in the livery of a disgraced minister is in the eyes of courtiers. I speak of the haughtiness that consists in nobility of sentiments of the heart and in an elevation of spirit. This haughtiness correctly estimates the value of the positions to which one can aspire and the pains that must be taken to achieve it, especially when this is a matter of appealing to people that one does not believe to be competent judges of ability. In short, abilities make them very capable of holding high offices, but frequently, in all eras, it happens that corruption and vice are the only means to

---

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
Vellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
Pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen."

When I was fain to sing of kings and battles, the Cynthian (Apollo)
plucked my ear and warned me: "A shepherd, Tityrus,
should feed sheep that are fat, but sing a lay fine-spun."

obtain them. Thus it happens that a lot of geniuses, born with the ability to hold high office, die without having manifested their talents. People did not want to entrust them with the command of armies or the government of provinces. People did not want to give to those born with a genius for architecture the supervision of a building that would allow him to exercise his talent.

But people born to be great painters or great poets are not like those who, if it is permitted to speak this way, could only realize themselves by the grace of good fortune. Fortune could not deprive them of the assistance necessary to manifest their talents, as I will explain.

The technical part of painting is painful to acquire, but it is not distasteful to those born with a genius for this art. They are sustained through difficulties by the attraction of a profession to which they feel suited and by the noticeable progress that they make in their studies. The students find teachers everywhere and this shortens the road. It does not matter whether these teachers are great men or mediocre craftsmen. It is sufficient that these teachers can teach a technique, of which they could not be ignorant, having taught this art for ten or twelve years. A student with genius learns to do well by seeing his teacher do poorly. The force of genius converts the most poorly digested precepts into a nourishing diet. A man born with genius does best what no one has shown him how to do. The lessons a teacher gives, says Seneca, are like seeds. The quality of fruit that the seeds produce depends primarily on the quality of the soil in which they are sown. The most stunted provides a good yield in an excellent soil. Thus when precepts drop into a well-disposed mind, they germinate fortunately and this mind, so to speak, yields a better quality of grain than was planted.

> *Eadem est, inquam, praeceptorum condicio quae seminum; multum efficiunt. et angusta sunt.* [*Tantum,*] *ut dixi, idonea mens capiat illa et in se trahat. Multa invicem et ipsa generabit et plus reddet quam acceperit.*
>
> [*Epist.* 32][14]

How many famous men in all professions learned the first principles of their professions, for which they were so famous, from masters who had no reputa-

14 Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius* 32.2: "Yes, precepts and seeds have the same quality; they produce much, and yet they are slight things. [Only,] as I said, let a favourable mind receive and assimilate them. Then of itself the mind also will produce bounteously in its turn, giving back more than it has received." The Latin, which is corrected here, is paraphrased in the preceding sentences.

tion except that which they acquired from their students. Thus Raphael[15] was taught by a mediocre painter, but kept going by his genius, which lifted him above his teacher after several years of work. He only needed the lessons of Pietro Perugino[16] to teach him how he should study. It was the same with Annibale Carracci,[17] Rubens,[18] Poussin,[19] Le Brun,[20] and other painters whose genius we admire.

As for poets, the principles of the practice of their art are so easy to understand and implement that they do not even need a teacher to show them how to study these principles. A person born with genius can teach himself in two months the rules of French poetry. He is even capable of tracing these rules to their spring, and of judging the importance of each rule by reference to the importance of the principle in which it is grounded. So the world never rewards with glory the person fortunate enough to have taught the basics of poetry to students whose reputation will resound through the ages. We never speak of Virgil's[21] poetry teacher or of Horace's. We do not even know who taught Molière[22] and Corneille,[23] so close to us in time, the caesura and rhythm of our verse. We do not think that these teachers deserve enough of the glory of their students for it to be worthwhile to devote any effort to discover and remember their names.

15 Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, usually known in English as Raphael (1483–1520), one of the greatest Italian Renaissance painters.

16 Pietro Perugino (ca. 1450–1523), Italian Renaissance painter and teacher of Raphael.

17 Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), distinguished Italian baroque painter, called here 'le Carrache' by Du Bos. He was a genuine artistic innovator, and with his brother and cousin opened a studio called *Incamminati*, which self-consciously announced their progressive approach.

18 Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), celebrated Flemish painter in the baroque style.

19 Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) prominent French exponent of the neo-classical style. He spent virtually all of his career in Rome.

20 Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), one of the giants of 17th century French painting.

21 Publius Virgilius Maro (70–19 BC), usually known in English as Virgil, one of the greatest of Roman poets. He is best known as author of the *Aeneid*, an epic about the founding of Rome.

22 Jean-Baptiste Poquelin known as Molière (1622–1673), French playwright.

23 Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), French dramatist.

CHAPTER 3

That the Impulse of Genius Determines the Being of a Painter or Poet; What They Have Had Since Birth.

There is no great value in putting a pen in a young poet's hand. The first to come, only his genius would make him take it up. Genius is not merely a simple calling that obligates those who have it to manifest it. A genius rejects nothing because his first efforts have not worked. He presses on with perseverance and knows in the end how to make his way through an unfocussed and squandered youth.

Neither highbrow nor blue-collar jobs, nor an education, seem to prevent a man of genius from applying himself to the things for which he was born. Nor can anything else prevent him from attaining his destiny, even though he has not yet achieved it. What is proposed to him as the object of his focus cannot detain him, if that object is not what nature wants him to follow. He is not derailed for long, and he always returns, despite others, and sometimes despite himself. Of all impulses, that from which he draws his *penchant*, namely nature, is the strongest.

> *Custode et cura natura potentior omni.*
> [Juvenal, *Sat.* 10][1]

Everything becomes a palette or a paintbrush in the hands of a child with the gift for painting. He lets others know his purpose, even when he does not yet know it.

What I am claiming is reported by historians of painting is apparent from an infinite number of facts. The majority of great painters were not born in workshops. Very few are sons of painters, who, following common practice, were raised in their fathers' profession. Among famous painters who are so distinguished over the last two centuries, only Raphael, as far as I can remember, was the son of a painter. The father of Giorgione[2] and Titian[3] held neither a paint-

1 Juvenal, *Satire* 10.303: "Nature is more powerful than any guardian and vigilance." Juvenal (fl. late-1st century–early 2nd century AD), Roman poet.

2 Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco, known as Giorgione (1477–1510), Italian painter who died at a young age. Along with Titian, he formed the Venetian school of painting, and was famed for his use of colour.

3 Tiziano Vecelli, known as Titian (1488–1576), painter in the Venetian School, known for his interest in colour.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_058

brush nor a chisel. Leonardo da Vinci[4] and Paolo Veronese[5] did not become painters as a result of their fathers. Michelangelo's parents lived the noble life, so to speak, without working in any lucrative profession. Andrea del Sarto[6] was the son of a tailor, and Tintoretto,[7] of a dye-maker. Carracci's[8] parents did not have a profession involving the use of pencils. Michelangelo de Caravaggio[9] was a mason's son, and Correggio[10] the son of a laborer. Reni[11] was the son of a musician, Domenichino[12] of a cobbler, and Albano[13] a merchant. Lanfranco[14] was a foundling whose genius taught him to paint, just like Pascal's[15] genius taught him mathematics. Rubens'[16] father, who was the Magistrate of Antwerp, had neither a workshop nor a studio[17] in his house. Van Dyck's[18] father was neither painter nor sculptor. Du Fresnoy,[19] from whom we have a poem on painting, which was worth being translated and commented upon by de Piles,[20] and from whom we also have some less than mediocre paintings, stud-

4 Leonardo di se Piero da Vinci (1452–1519), Italian painter, architect, sculptor, mathematician, anatomist, and scientist.

5 Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), important Mannerist Italian painter.

6 Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530), Italian painter. 'Del Sarto' means 'son of a tailor.'

7 Tintoretto (1518–1594) was an Italian painter. His birth name was Jacopo Comin, and he was also called Jacopo Robusti after his father's military success. His nickname 'Tintoretto' means 'little dyer,' since his father was a dyer.

8 See Book Two, Chapter Two.

9 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), Italian painter. His father was a household administrator for the Marchese of Caravaggio, and also engaged in architectural projects.

10 Antonio Allegri da Correggio (1489–1534), Italian painter of the Parma school.

11 Guido Reni (1575–1642), Italian baroque painter. Both his mother and father were musicians.

12 Domenico Zampieri, also known as Domenichino (1581–1641), a student of Carracci and painter of the Bolognese school.

13 Francesco Albani or Albano (1578–1660), Italian painter, born to a silk merchant.

14 Giovanni Lanfranco (1582–1647) Italian painter. There is no evidence that he was a foundling, although as a child he was placed in the service of Count Scotti.

15 Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), French mathematician and philosopher. He is famed as a mathematician, inventor of the mechanical calculator, and proponent of probability theory. His father was a mathematician and scientist, and he educated all of his own children.

16 Rubens' father was a magistrate who was later imprisoned for impregnating the wife of William I of Orange.

17 Artists typically sold their works directly out of their own studio (*boutique*).

18 Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), Dutch painter who became England's court painter. He was born into a wealthy family.

19 Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy (1611–1668), French painter and writer. His father was an apothecary, and it was expected that Du Fresnoy would become a medical doctor. He was the author of *De Arte Graphica* (Paris: 1668).

20 Roger De Piles (1635–1709), French painter and art critic.

ied to become a doctor. The fathers of the vast majority of French painters in the last century, Valentin,[21] le Sueur,[22] Poussin[23] and Le Brun,[24] were not painters. It was the genius of these great men that led them to search in their parents' houses for a way to Mount Parnassus. Painters climb Parnassus as well as poets do.

All poets with famous names are even stronger proof for my thesis about genius' impulse. There would not be a single poet if the rise of genius had not destined certain men to make poetry their profession. No father ever destines his son to become a professional poet. A further point: those who care for the education of a sixteen-year-old boy try to turn him away from poetry, and we know why, from the moment he admits even a little taste for poetic verses. To extinguish his son's passion, Ovid's father was not content with punishment. But such was the power of genius that little Ovid, we are told, promised *in verse* not to make more verses when he was chastized for having done so. Horace's first profession was to carry arms. Virgil was a kind of horse dealer. As we read about his life, he made himself known to Augustus by telling him secrets for curing horses, for which the poet was introduced into the emperor's stables. But without dwelling too long on ancient history, let us reflect on the vocations of poets of our own day. Examples drawn from circumstances we know well will be more striking than those drawn from past eras. We will easily see that what happened to our poets happens to poets of any age.

All great French poets working in the era of Louis XIV[25] were drawn by their birth and education to make poetry their profession. None was engaged in the job of teaching children, nor other occupations that quietly drive an intelligent man to Parnassus. On the contrary, they appeared drawn either by the profession that they already had or by work for which their birth and education destined them. Molière's[26] father raised his son to be a good tapestry-maker.

---

21 Valentin de Boulonge (1591–1632), French painter. Du Bos is mistaken: both Valentin's father and uncle were painters.

22 Eustache le Sueur (1617–1655), French painter. He was among those who founded the French Academy of Painting. Le Sueur's father was a sculptor.

23 Poussin depicted ancient myths and history in his luxurious paintings, drawn from the books of the ancient poets.

24 Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), French painter. Both Poussin and Le Brun were pupils in the studio of French painter Simon Vouet (1590–1649) from a young age.

25 Louis XIV (1638–1715), King of France for three-quarters of a century, from 1643 until his death.

26 Molière's first employment, secured for him by his father, was as Louis XIII's valet, where he was responsible for maintaining the King's rooms, including his carpets and upholsteries.

Pierre Corneille[27] wore the robes of a lawyer when he wrote his first works. Quinault[28] worked as a clerk for a lawyer when he threw himself into the arms of poetry. His first comedies were written on a scrap of legal paper half covered in printer's ink. Racine[29] wore the ecclesiastic habit of the most serious of professions when he composed his first three tragedies. The reader will easily see that the monks who raised Racine from birth, and who were entrusted with his education, never encouraged him to write for theatre. On the contrary, they stopped at nothing to extinguish his love of rhyming. Le Maître[30], in whose care Racine was especially entrusted, hid books of French poetry from him as soon as he noticed his inclinations. He took as much care as Pascal's father did in robbing his son of anything that would make him think of geometry. La Fontaine wore the clothes of a caretaker of water and forests, being destined to plant and cut down trees for a living, not to make them speak. If Chapelle's[31] father Huillier had been in charge of his son's activities, he would have applied him to anything but poetry. Everyone knows by heart the verses in which Boileau,[32] who was son, brother, uncle, and cousin to a court clerk, gives an account of his vocation which began with printer's powder and ends with Parnassus. All these great men revealed that nature, not education, makes a poet. *Poetam natura ipsa valere et mentis viribus excitari, et quasi divino quodam spiritu afflari* [Cicer. *For Arch. Poët.*].[33]

Without leaving our time, let us take a look at the history of other professions that demand particular genius. We will see that most of those who became famous for their professional work were encouraged not by advice or by their parents' incentive, but by a natural inclination arising from their genius. Nanteuil's[34] parents made the same efforts to prevent him from being an engraver,

27 Having studied law, Corneille struggled to find employment. His father set him up in magisterial government posts, which is where he was working when he wrote his first play, *Mélite*.

28 Phillippe Quinault (1635–1688), French poet, best known for providing the libretti for many of Lully's operas.

29 After his parents died when he was just a small child, Racine was raised first by his grandparents and then, with his grandmother, in the Port-Royal convent.

30 Antoine Le Maître (or Le Maister) (1608–1658), French lawyer and man of letters.

31 Jean de la Chapelle (1651–1723), French dramatist and writer of middling success. He was chair of the Académie française beginning in 1688.

32 Nicolas Boileau-Déspreaux (1636–1711), leading French poet and critic.

33 Cicero, *For Archias* 18: "A poet draws strength only from nature, is motivated by the strength of his own mind, and grows by some quasi-divine spirit."

34 Robert Nanteuil (1623–1678), French portrait artist whose work, regarded very highly, was in high demand.

as parents usually made to force their children to study for some profession. Nanteuil was left to climb a tree and hide there in order to draw.

Le Fèvre,[35] a born algebrist and great astronomer, began to fulfill his destiny when he worked as a weaver's assistant in Lisieux. The threads of his loom were for him the occasion to teach himself the science of calculus. In guarding sheep, Roberval could not escape his star which destined him to be a great geometer.[36] Before even knowing that there was a science named 'geometry,' he learned it. He traced geometric figures in the ground with his staff. He met someone who noticed how this child was amusing himself and procured for him an education more suited to his talents than what he received from the peasant who was caring for him. Many people have taken the time to publish Pascal's story, which is known all over Europe. Far from pushing him to study geometry, his father very carefully concealed anything that could give his son an idea of this science, out of fear that he would enthusiastically succumb to its attractions. But he found that the child's own genius led him to grasp a number of Euclidian propositions. Stripped of a guide or teacher and without having studied a single lesson, he had already made surprising progress in geometry.

Tournefort's parents did everything possible to undermine the genius that he brought to the study of botany.[37] To become a herborist, he had to hide himself like other children who steal away to play. Bernoulli,[38] who acquired such a great reputation in his youth and who died twenty-five years ago as professor of mathematics at the University of Basel, was brought to this science despite his father's long-standing efforts to discourage him. He hid to study mathematics, and this made him take Phaethon's device with these words as his motto: *Invito patre sidera verso*.[39] This is written at the bottom of his portrait hanging in the Library of the City of Basel. The reader often remembers from what he has read, just as he hears from eyewitness testimony, about the subject discussed here. I would bore him with stories that prove that nothing is an insurmountable obstacle to the impulse of genius; he knows them already. Was it not despite

35 Jean Le Fèvre (1652–1706), Parisian astronomer and physicist known for publishing *Connaissances des temps* with Jean Picard (1602–1682), also a French astronomer.

36 Gilles Personne de Roberval (1602–1675), French mathematician.

37 Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656–1708), French botanist at the Jardin des Plantes, notable for having defined the concept of genus.

38 Jacques Bernoulli (1655–1705), mathematician best known for advancing the first version of the law of large numbers.

39 "I study stars against my father's will." A device, or logotype (now simply known as a 'logo') is a personal emblem, which would have been used to mark papers and letters. His device is Phaethon riding a chariot into the sun. Phaethon, a figure in Greek mythology, is the son of the Sun (*Helios*).

his parents that the modern author of the biography of Philippe Auguste and Charles VII devoted himself to writing history, for which he has great natural talent? [*Baudot de Julli, Receveur des Tailles a Sarlat*].[40] *Hercules*,[41] *Soliman*,[42] and many other works of theatre—would they have been composed if genius had not exerted violence on their true authors, if they had not been forced to busy themselves to their own liking in depicting the education they received and the profession they have embraced? Suppose we leave the Republic of Letters, in order to run through the history of other professions, and mainly that of distinguished generals. Is it not typically against the advice of parents of those not born into a military family that they embrace the armed forces?

People's births can, perhaps, be considered from two perspectives. We can consider them from the perspective of their physical make-up and the natural inclinations that depend on that make-up. We can also consider them from the perspective of fortune and the condition into which they were born as members of a particular social class. Physical birth always has an impact on social birth. Let me explain. Education cannot provide a particular genius or certain inclinations to children who lack them, but it also cannot remove that genius or rob inclinations that children have had since birth. Children are constrained only for a short while by the education they receive as a result of social birth. But the inclinations they have as a consequence of their physical birth last as long as the man himself. They are the result of the construction and arrangement of his organs, and they ceaselessly push him towards his predisposition.

> *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*,[43]

Horace says. These inclinations have their full impetuosity precisely at the age when the constraints of education come to an end.

40 Nicolas Baudot de Jully (1678–1759), French historian and bursar (receiver of taxes) at Sarlat in south-west France. Jully wrote several histories, including those mentioned here: *Histoire de Philippe-Auguste* (1702) and *Histoire de Charles VII* (1756).

41 Possibly *Hercule mourant* (1632) by Jean Rotrou, later Jean de Rotrou (1609–1650), French playwright and poet. His *Venceslas* (1647) (to give it its French title) is considered one of the best of his thirty-five or more plays.

42 Possibly *Le Soliman* (1639) by Charles de Vion d'Alibray or Dalibray (ca. 1590–1652), French translator and poet. Du Bos may allude to the fact that Rotrou and d'Alibray came from privileged families who would have thought that a career in theatre was infra dig.

43 Horace, *Epistles* 1.10.24: "You may drive out Nature with a pitchfork, yet she will ever hurry back."

CHAPTER 4

An Objection to the Preceding Proposition and a Response to the Objection.

Someone might object that I do not have an accurate idea of what happens in society when I suppose that all geniuses achieve their vocation. You are unaware, one might add, that the needs of life enslave, so to speak, most people in the situation where they were born and raised. The misery of these conditions must snuff out a great many geniuses who would have been distinguished, had they been born in more favourable circumstances.

> *Ut saepe summa ingenda in occult latent*
> *Hic qualis imperator nunc priuatus est.*
> [Plaut. *Capt.* Act 1, Scene 2][1]

Most people, dedicated to manual trades from childhood, become old without having had the opportunity to acquire the knowledge that is necessary for their genius to take off. Someone might say to me, with a poetic flourish, that some coachman, dressed in rags and tatters, who earns a poor livelihood by beating two scrawny horses, tied to a coach ready to collapse, might have become a Raphael or even a Virgil, if he had been born into a well-off family and received an education in proportion to his talents.

I have already allowed that people born with the genius to command armies or even with the genius to hold any high office and even, if you like, with a genius for architecture, only manifest their genius if they are supported by luck and served by circumstances. Thus I grant that most people who are sometimes called 'common people' die without leaving a name to tell posterity that they ever existed. Their talents remain buried because fortune has not uncovered them. But people who are born painters or poets are different, and we are only concerned with them. With regard to these latter, I regard the various conditions that constitute a society as a sea. Mediocre geniuses are submerged but powerful geniuses find, in the end, the means to reach the shore.

1 Plautus, *Prisoners* 1.2.165–166: "How often the greatest talents lie hidden! So great a commander is a private citizen today." Titus Maccius Plautus (ca. 254–184 BC). Roman author of comedies.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_059

People are not at birth what they are at thirty. Before they are masons, labourers, or cobblers, they are children for a long time. For a long time they are adolescents and ready to be apprenticed to a profession, to which they are called by their genius. The period that nature gives to children destined to be great painters for their apprenticeship lasts until they are twenty-five. The genius that makes someone a painter or poet prevents him, from his childhood, from being enslaved by manual labour and he searches for ways and means to be taught. Suppose that a father is so devoid of resources that he cannot provide a suitable education to his child who displays a nobler inclination than his peers. Someone else will take care of him. The child will seek with all his heart and finally chance will provide for him. When I say 'chance,' I mean each of the opportunities taken in particular. These opportunities will present themselves so frequently that the chance that provides for the child must arrive sooner or later. The child born with genius and those who seek to teach children of this type will meet in the end.

It is not difficult to see how children of genius, born in a town, fall into the hands of people capable of teaching them. As for the countryside, in most of Europe it is strewn with monasteries and their clergy never fail to notice a young peasant who displays more curiosity and more open-mindedness than his peers. He assists at the mass and this is the gateway to his initial studies. Nothing more is required. The mind, given a place to show off, brings other people to its assistance. He even runs ahead of the assistance that they provide. We owe to these protectors of displaced geniuses a multitude of excellent works. Adrien Baillet,[2] to whom we owe a large number of very well-researched and erudite books, was caught in this net.

Besides, the genius that destines a child for literature or painting gives him a huge aversion to manual labour in which his peers engage. He acquires a dislike for ordinary jobs that would lower his elevated mind. The painful constraints of his youth become insupportable in proportion to his state and his awareness of his talent and his misery. His instinct and the little that he hears of the world give him confused glimpses of his vocation and he feels out of place. Finally, he steals away from his paternal home, as did Sextus v[3] and so many others,

2 Adrien Baillet (1649–1706), French clergyman, biographer, historian, and polymath, best known today as a biographer of Descartes. Born in the small village of Neuville, his parents could only send him to the village school. He came to the attention of friars from a nearby monastery and they taught him some Latin. The Bishop of Beauvais enabled him to be educated at a seminary and he became a teacher at a college in Beauvais. He subsequently became a priest and embarked on a distinguished career as a man of letters, writing many books.

3 Born Felice Peretti di Montalto (1521–1590), pope 1585–1590. He came from a poor family.

heading for a neighbouring town. If his genius directs him towards poetry, and consequently to the love of literature, his fortunate nature will deserve an honest man find him worthy of his attention. He will fall into the hands of someone who will destine him for a career in the church. All Christian communions are full of charitable people who believe it their duty to provide a suitable education for poor students who show some sign of genius. They do so with a view to providing good people for their churches. The children become youths and are not always obliged to follow the pious wishes of their benefactors. If their genius leads them to poetry, they are carried away by it and abandon themselves to a profession that others had not intended them to follow, and for which their education made them capable. How can we believe that healthy seeds will remain on the ground when the world collects with care those that display the least promise?

I would go further. When unfavourable circumstances have enslaved a man of genius to a menial trade before he has learned to read, which may be supposed to be the most serious obstacle to his destiny, his genius will not cease to manifest itself. He will learn to read at age twenty so that he can independently enjoy the great pleasure that verse provides to everyone born to be a poet. Soon he will begin to write his own verses. Two poets have been educated in the shops of two trades, which are certainly not the most noble: the famous Carpenter of Nevers[4] and the Shoemaker, Repairer of the Buskins of Apollo.[5] Aubry,[6] a Parisian master paver, produced sixty years ago tragedies from his own pen. We have even seen an illiterate coachman write verse.[7] True, they are very bad, but it is still proof that the faintest spark of the lowest poetic fire cannot be so well hidden that it fails to glimmer. In short, teaching a person to read does not make him a poet; poetical genius, that nature gave him at birth, makes him learn. It forces him to search for the means of knowledge required to perfect his talent.

---

4 Du Bos refers to Adam Billaut (1602–1662), French carpenter and poet. He published several books of poetry and received patronage from leading figures of the age, including Cardinal Richelieu.

5 Du Bos refers to Hans Sachs (1494–1576), Meistersinger, poet, and shoemaker from Nuremburg. As a boy, Sachs attended a singing school in a local church. He was apprenticed as a shoemaker at age fourteen and practiced this trade in several German towns. He attracted the attention of the Emperor Maximilian I and later became Meistersinger of Munich. He left a large number of works of various kinds, including songs, plays, and fables.

6 Jean-Baptiste Aubry (?–1692), a master paver and playwright. His tragedies include *Agathocle* (1690) and *Démétrius* (1689).

7 Du Bos may allude to Alan René Lesage, *L'Ombre du cocher poète* [The Shade of the Coach-

The child born with a genius for painting draws with a piece of coal, at age ten, the saints that he sees in his church. Twenty years will not pass without him finding an occasion to cultivate his talent. Someone will take him to a neighbouring town where, under the worst of teachers, he will make himself worthy of the attention of the most capable teacher, for whom he will soon search, province by province. But suppose that this child remains in his village. He will then cultivate his natural genius until one of his pictures surprises someone passing by. That was the fate of Correggio who was a great painter before the world had heard tell that in the town of Correggio there was a young man of great promise, who displayed a fresh talent in his work. If this happens rarely, it is because geniuses as profound as Correggio are born rarely. It is even rarer that such geniuses are found in their birthplace at the age of twenty. Geniuses who remain enslaved all of their lives are, as I have already said, feeble geniuses. They are people who would never have dreamed of painting or writing if they had not been told to work. They are people who would never search for art themselves; it is always necessary to show it to them. Losing them is nothing much; they were not born to be illustrious artists.

The history of painters and poets and other men of letters is full of stories that would fully convince us that nothing would prevent children born with genius from surmounting the greatest obstacles that birth can place between them and art schools. In such a matter, facts are more eloquent than reasoning can be. Those who do not want to go to the trouble of reading history may devote the least reflection to the energy and flexibility of youth and to the numberless ways, of which I have mentioned only a few, that can lead a child into a situation in which he can cultivate his natural talent. They will be convinced that it is impossible that, of a hundred geniuses, only one always remains buried in obscurity, unless by a bizarre series of events a genius is born among Kalmyk Tartars[8] or transported in his infancy to Lapland.

man Poet] (1722), a puppet play. This work was not published until 1722, or three years after the first edition of the *Critical Reflections*, but perhaps it had been performed earlier.

8 A western Mongolian people settled in the North Caucasus region in present day Russia.

CHAPTER 5

Studies and Progress of Painters and Poets.

Genius is a plant that, so to speak, pushes itself; but quality, like the quantity of fruits, depends very much on the care it receives. The most fortunate genius can only be perfected with the help of lengthy study.

> *Natura fieret laudabile carmen, an arte,*
> *Quaesitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena,*
> *Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium. Alterius sic*
> *Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amice.*
> [Hor. *Art of poet.*][1]

Quintilian, another great master of works of intellect, dissuades us from asking the question of whether it is genius or study that makes for an excellent orator. There is no great orator, he claims, without the help of art and genius. *Scio quaeri natura ne plus conferat ad eloquentiam quam doctrina. Quod ad propositum nostri quidem operis non pertinet. Nec enim consummatus artifex, nisi ex utraque fieri potest* [Quint. *Instit*. bk. 11].[2]

But a man born with genius is soon capable of studying completely on his own. The study that he chooses, determined by his own taste, contributes the most to his formation. This study consists in paying continuous attention to nature. It consists in serious reflection on the works of the great masters, observing what he must imitate, which he must try to surpass. These observations teach us many things that our genius would never have suggested by itself, or which would only be noticed too late. One masters in a day ways and means of acting which cost journeymen [*Inventeurs*] years of research and labour. Supposing that, one day, our genius had the power to bring us to that same point, though the road had not been smooth. It will be at the cost of an exhaustion equal to that of the inventers.

Apparently Michelangelo worked for a long time before he painted the majesty of the eternal Father with its proud, divine character. Perhaps Raphael,

1 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 408–411: "Often it is asked whether a praiseworthy poem be due to nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league."

2 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.19.1: "I am aware that it is asked whether nature contributes

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_060

born with a weaker genius than the Florentine, would never have come to the sublimity of that idea if left to his own devices. At least, he would arrive only after countless futile attempts, and at the cost of multiple, considerable efforts. But, in a moment, Raphael saw Michelangelo's painting of the eternal Father. Struck by the superiority of this powerful genius' idea, who can be called 'the Corneille of Painting,' Raphael understood it. After admiring the work of his contemporary, he was able to add dignified, proud, and divine characteristics to his figures in a single day, just as Michelangelo had done when representing the eternal Father. Let us recount the story at length, since it proves what I am saying better than long arguments.

In the time of which I speak, Raphael painted the gallery's arched roof, which divides the apartments of the second floor of the Vatican. This gallery is commonly called 'the Lodges.' The arched roof is not a continuous vault, but is divided into as many square arches as there are windows in the gallery. Each of these arches has its own particular focal point. Each arch has four faces, and on each of the sides of the first arch, during the time of which I speak, Raphael painted a story from the Old Testament. He had already finished three of these facades, the three days of the work of creation, when the story I am going to tell occurred. In these three paintings the figure representing God the Father is truly noble and venerable, but it has too much sweetness and not enough majesty. His head is nothing other than a man's head. Raphael treated it in the style of heads that painters made for their Christs, and there is no difference between the heads other than what needs to be added following the laws of art: one is supposed to represent the Father and the other the Son. While Raphael was starting on his frescoes in the Lodges' vault, Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Vatican's Chapels, which were built by Pope Sixtus IV. Even though Michelangelo was protective of his ideas and shut the door to everyone, Raphael had the gumption to get in. Struck by the divine majesty and the noble pride that Michelangelo expressed in the character of the eternal Father's head, which can be seen from different places in the Sistine Chapel, Raphael quit his method of working on creation and adopted that of his colleague. In the last picture in the first Lodge, Raphael represented the eternal Father with a greater-than-human majesty. It does not inspire a simple veneration: it marks a respectful terror. True, Bellori denies Michelanglo the honour of having heightened Raphael's style. But his reasons do not seem to contradict the com-

---

more to oratory than study. This question has nothing to do with the subject of my book. For a perfect artist can only be made from both."

mon opinion founded on Roman tradition, and on other facts that he denies [*Descrizione delle imagini di Rafaello d'Urbino nelle Camere del Vaticano*, p. 86].[3]

Raphael still was not colouring well when he first saw a painting by Giorgione. In an instant he saw that art could exact more beauty from colours than he had used until that time. He understood that he had ignored the art of colour. Raphael attempted to do what Giorgione had done and, creating by the force of his genius, he approached his own picture in Giorgione's admirable manner of working. Raphael made his own attempt at imitation by painting the picture [Bellori, ibid] representing the miracle at Bolsene, where the priest who, doubting the doctrine of transubstantiation, gives Mass before the Pope and sees the consecrated host turn to blood in his hands. This fresco of which I speak is called *The Mass of Pope Julius*,[4] and it is painted on fresh plaster above and to the sides of the window in the second part of the apartment in the Vatican. It is enough for the reader to know that this painting is from the height of Raphael's talent to be persuaded that its artistry is marvellous. The priest who doubts the real presence of Christ, and who saw the host that he consecrated become bloodied in his hands during the elevation [of the host], appears filled with terror and respect. The painter has preserved the character of each of the other figures well; but above all we are delighted by the look of surprise on the faces of the Pope's Swiss guards, who look on at the miracle from the bottom of Raphael's painting where Raphael placed them. This is how this great artist elicited the poetic beauty from the need to observe *il costume*: by giving the sovereign pontiff his ordinary attire. With poetic license, Raphael used the face of Julius II to represent the Pope before whom the miracle occurred.[5] Although he looks carefully upon the miracle, Julius does not appear very moved by it. The painter supposes that the sovereign pontiff was too convinced of the real presence of Christ to be surprised by the miraculous events happening to the consecrated host. One could not give the visible head of the Church, when he is placed in a similar context, a nobler or more suitable expression. This expression reveals the particular character traits of Julius II. We recognize in

3 Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Descrizione delle Immagini dipinte da Raffaelle D'Urbino nel Palazzio Vaticano* [Description of Raphael D'Urbino's painted images in the Vatican Palace]. Bellori (1613–1696), Italian painter, is best known for writing biographies of 17th-century artists.

4 This fresco is known as *The Mass at Bolsena*. Completed in 1512, the scene depicts Pope Julius as witness to a eucharistic miracle reported to have occurred in 1263. The story follows what Du Bos describes here, although the inclusion of the then-sitting Pope as witness is pure poetic license, as is the inclusion of Raphael himself painted as a Swiss guard.

5 Pope Julius II (1443–1513) commissioned the artwork described here by Du Bos, specifically the painting of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling by Michelangelo.

his portrait Mirandola's obstinate pest.[6] But the colours of this painting, which is why we spoke of it, are far superior to the colours in Raphael's other paintings. Even Titian has not painted flesh in which we see better the softness that must be in a body composed of liquids and solids. The drapes appear to be beautiful wool and silk that a tailor would use. Had Raphael made more paintings with such rich and vibrant colours, he would be numbered among the very best colourists.

It is the same with young, natural-born poets. The beauties that are in works of art done before them strike them vividly. They easily grasp the way the technique of the authors of these works and their way of turning a phrase. I would love to have a reliable account of the moment when Virgil's imagination was ignited and enriched, on reading the *Iliad* for the first time.

The works of great masters have another attraction for young people of genius: it flatters their self-love. A young man of genius discovers in these works beauties and graces, of which he previously had only confused ideas, rendered with all possible perfection. He believes he recognizes his own ideas in the beauties of a masterpiece consecrated by the approval of the public. The same thing happens to him that happened to Correggio, when he was just a simple bourgeois from the town of Correggio, when he first saw a painting by Raphael. I say 'a simple bourgeois,' despite an erroneous story, debasing Correggio to the condition of a peasant, and a poor peasant at that. Crozat[7] extracted several proofs from the public registers of the town of Correggio that make it clear that Vasari was completely wrong in what he said about Correggio's fortunes, and above all in the report he made about the circumstances of his death.[8]

Before Correggio had left his hometown, even though he was already a great painter, he was so taken by what he had heard about Raphael, to whom princes were happy to give gifts and honours, that he imagined that such a world-famous artist had such greater recognition than him only because he had not yet pulled himself out of a state of mediocrity. An inexperienced man of the

6 Du Bos alludes to the Siege of Mirandola in 1510, undertaken by Pope Julius II.

7 Pierre Crozat (1665–1740), very wealthy art collector. The source of Du Bos' report from Crozat is unknown.

8 Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), Italian painter and historian. He established the genre of art history with his 1550 *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, et architettori* [Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects], in which he formally introduced what has come to be standard terminology ('Renaissance,' 'Gothic Art'). Du Bos is correct in his criticism, and Vasari was known for the unresearched, often gossip-based anecdotes that appear throughout the biographies.

world, he judged Raphael's fame was greater than his own due to differences in their circumstances. One day, Corregio went to see a painting by this famous painter. After having examined it carefully, after having thought about what he would be able to do had he treated the same subject as Raphael, he cried out, "I am just as good a painter as he!" The same thing probably happened to Racine when he read *El Cid* for the first time.

On the contrary, nothing marks out the man born without genius more than seeing him coldly examine and insipidly discuss the merit of works by men who have excelled in the art he wants to practice. A man of genius should not speak of the mistakes made by great masters until much praise has been given to the beauties of their works. He should speak as a father does of his own son's faults. Born with a genius for war, Caesar was brought to tears while viewing a statue of Alexander.[9] When he went to view the statue of that Greek hero, whose glory had been carried by fame to all corners of the earth, his first thought was not of the mistakes Alexander made during his expeditions. He did not compare them to his own great actions. Caesar was enthralled.

I do not say that it is wrong to criticize a young artist who comments on mistakes in the works of great masters. The mistakes are truly there; the artists are, after all, human. Far from preventing mistakes from being noticed, genius even makes them perceptible. What I regard as a bad sign is when a young man is unmoved by the excellence of the great masters' output. He shows no enthusiasm in reading them. In order to know whom he should esteem, he must weigh their beauties and their faults, and must not form an opinion about their merit until after having finished his evaluation. Should he have the vivacity and delicacy of sentiment, which are inseparable from genius, he would be so enthralled by the beauties of these sacred works that he would throw away the scales and compass he uses for judging them. He would judge them just as men have always judged them, that is, by the impression that the works make on them. Scales are not the right tool for deciding the price of pearls and diamonds. Whatever its weight, baroque[10] pearl that comes from polluted water, no matter what their size, will never be as valuable as the famous peregrine pearl;[11] this pearl, for which a merchant dared to pay one hundred thousand gold coins, thinking, as he said to Philip IV, that there is a King of Spain in

9 This story is recounted in Suetonius, *Life of Julius Caesar* 7.1 and Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar* 11.5–6.

10 Irregularly shaped.

11 This pearl has a special history of its own. First found in the Gulf of Panama by an African slave, it has been a frequent gift between kings and queens throughout the world, which perhaps explains its name (*'La peregrina'* is Spanish for 'the Wanderer'). Its beauty comes

the world.[12] One hundred thousand mediocre beauties put together would not have as much value nor as much weight, so to speak, as even one of those tropes which modern writers, even those who write eclogues, must extol in Virgil's *Bucolics*.

Genius is immediately recognized in the works of gifted young people. They give off signs of their genius even before they know how to practice their art. We see ideas and expressions in their works that we have never seen before. We see brand new ideas in them. Despite their faults, we notice a mind that yearns to attain great beauties, and which, to get there, does things that his own teacher is not capable of teaching him. If the youths are poets, they invent new characters, they say things we have never read, and their verses are filled with turns of expression never seen anywhere before. For example, verifiers who compose opera, but lack genius, can only recycle hackneyed phrases and expressions, "as Lully warmed over sounds in his music," as Boileau said.[13] Since Quinault was the author and inventor of the style appropriate for opera, it shows that Quinault had a particular genius. But those who could only repeat what came before them, lacked this genius. On the contrary, a poet whose genius allows him to give life to new ideas is able at the same time to produce new symbols, and to create new ways to express them. It is very rare that we have to borrow expressions from others to make our thoughts known. It is even rare that is it difficult to find these expressions. Thought and expression almost always originate at the same time.

The young painter endowed with genius soon begins to deviate from his master when his master deviates from nature. His half-opened eyes have already made the discovery. Often he sees nature better than those who tried to teach him. When he painted at Sienna, Raphael was not even twenty years old and was still a student of Pietro Perugino.[14] Nonetheless, Raphael distinguished

---

from its perfect symmetry, its distinctive pear-shape, and its colour. The pearl is depicted in several works of art.

12 King Philippe IV of Spain (1605–1665) reigned Spain until his death. Known to Du Bos as a reigning monarch of his day, Philippe would have also been on his mind for his great reputation as a patron of the arts, especially for his generous support of the court painter Diego Velázquez (1599–1660).

13 Boileau did not utter these words. According to an article titled "Académie Impériale de Musique" in *Feuilleton du Journal de l'Empire* (25 June 1811) Boileau in fact detested the operas of Quinault, and ridiculed them for their ridiculous and romanesque chivalry. Boileau was said to have admired some of Quinault's lines, one of which is the one quoted here. However, Boileau thought that Lully reheated or reused the cold chivalry of Quinault.

14 Du Bos' source of this information is likely Vasari's bibliography of Raphael in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, which as mentioned is somewhat

himself so much that he assigned paintings whose composition he designed. We see that he was already searching for ways to vary the attitude of the head. He wanted to give his figures a soul. He painted nudes under cloth, in short, he achieved many things that apparently his master never taught him. The master became the disciple: from Perugino's paintings at the Sistine Chapel, we see that Perugino learned from Raphael.[15]

Another indicator of genius in young people is that they progress very slowly in everyday arts and practices that make up the general activities of common men during adolescence, but at the same time make giant leaps in the profession for which nature has wholly destined them. Born solely for this profession, their minds appear worse than mediocre when applying themselves to other tasks, which they learn with difficulty and execute gracelessly. Consumed by ideas having to do with his profession, the student painter matures more slowly in day-to-day tasks and activities than young people of his age. His vivacity makes him seem scatter-brained, and distraction arising from his non-stop focus on his own ideas makes him awkward. Such a young painter generally turns into an excellent artist. These very faults are a mark of the activity of his genius. The world is nothing for him but a collection of objects suitable for being imitated in colour. What he finds most heroic in Charles v's life is that this great emperor stooped down to pick up Titian's paintbrush.[16] Do not prematurely disabuse a young artist convinced of the merits of his art. At least for the first years of his work, let him believe that today's famous artists and scientists have the same status as that held among the Greeks. Experience can only disillusion him too soon.

---

whimsical with detail. The fact of this apprenticeship is a matter of dispute, although art historians detect the influence of Pietro Perugino (1446–1523), a painter in the Umbrian school at Sienna.

15 There are three fresco panels painted by Perugino in the Sistine Chapel: *Moses and Zipporah, The Baptism of Christ* and *The Delivery of the Keys*, the last of which was discussed in Du Bos, Volume One, Chapter Thirteen.

16 Charles v (1500–1558), King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor. Titian was commissioned to paint a portrait of Charles v, known as *Equestrian Portrait of Charles v* (1548). Titian's social standing as a man was low, but he was elevated into royal circles because of his talents. Du Bos' reference to Charles' picking up his paintbrush is an allusion to the friendly relationship between king and peasant painter. This portrait is now in the Prado Museum in Madrid.

CHAPTER 6

Of Artists without Genius.

We have already said that there are no people, generally speaking, who are born without some talent that serves the needs of society or makes it more pleasant, but all of these talents are different. These are people who come into the world suited to a particular profession by their given talent. Others are born suited to various professions. They are capable of undertaking several professions, but their success in these will only be mediocre. Nature has put them in the world to make up for the shortage of people of genius, people who are destined to do great things in one sphere without being able to do anything else.

Truly, a person able to succeed in several professions is very rarely a person able to be highly successful in any. Similarly, soil suitable for growing several species of plants will not be ideal for any of them. A seed will thrive in a soil ideal for it, a soil that would not be suitable for other species. A soil as suitable for growing grapes as for growing grain supplies neither exquisite wine nor excellent grain. The same properties that make a soil especially suited to a particular plant do not do anything for another plant.

When one of these multipurpose minds, which are suited to everything because they are suited to nothing, is led to Parnassus by guesswork, he learns the rules of poetry well enough to avoid gross errors. He is usually a follower of some author whom he takes for his model. He cultivates the thought patterns of his hero and fills his memory with the hero's turns of phrase. The people of whom I speak, destined to be the nursemaids of mediocre artists, have not had their eyes opened by genius. Consequently, they do not perceive in nature the thing that they must imitate. The objects he imitates he finds in copies of nature, made by people of genius. If this epigone has some sense, even if it is born weak, then he, so to speak, honourably subsists by plundering the patrimony of others. He writes so correctly and always rhymes so richly that his new works do not fail to have a certain popularity in the world. If their author does not pass for a genius, he passes at least for a bright mind. It is impossible, we say, to write better verse without being a poet. Let him avoid writing for the general public, I mean for the theatre. The best-written verses, if void of creativity or adorned only with borrowed artistry, ought not to be given a flashy production. Only some private places are suitable to serve as their cradles. They ought to see the light of day only in front of certain people, and the general public should only hear them after having been informed that such and such have approved of them. This approval inspires prejudices that will last for quite some time.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_061

If our epigone lacks sense, he uses without purpose the features and turns of phrase of his hero and his verses only offer us misplaced reminders [of them]. He conducts himself in the publication of these works as he did in writing them. He affronts the general public with more audaciousness than Racine and Quinault had in similar situations. Catcalled on one stage, he goes on to be booed on another. The more scorned, the better known he is. In the end his name becomes the catchphrase the public uses to refer to a lousy poet. He is lucky when his disgrace is forgotten.

Mediocre minds suitable to a lot of things have the same fate when it comes to painting. A person of this temperament, when circumstances lead him to paint, imitates slavishly, rather than exactly, his master's taste for colours and shapes. If he does not become an elegant draughtsman, he becomes a correct one. If we would not praise the excellence of his colouration, at least we do not notice crude misrepresentations of reality: rules tell him not to. But since rules can only teach people of genius to succeed in artistic planning and composing, the epigone's pictures are very defective in these two respects. His works are beautiful only in places, because he has not imagined a complete outline but has made it bit by bit and it does not amount to a unified whole.

> *Infelix operis summa quia ponere totum*
> *Nesciet …*
> [Horace, *Art* 5.34][1]

In vain is such a person apprenticed to the best teacher. In such a studio he would not even make the progress that a person of genius makes in the studio of a mediocre teacher. The teacher, as Quintilian observed, could not communicate to his student the talent to create and the art of inventing, which are the greatest merits of painters and orators. *Ea quae in oratore maxima sunt, imitabilia non sunt. Ingenium, inventio, vis, facilitas et quidquid arte non traditur*.[2] Thus the painter can share some of the tricks of his trade, but he could not share any of the skills for composition and expression. A student devoid of genius is often even incapable of acquiring his teacher's skill in the mechanical part of the art. The epigone must remain below his model because he adds his own faults to the faults of the one that he imitates. Besides, if the teacher is a man of genius, he is soon disgusted by teaching such a person. It is torture

1 Horace, *Art of poetry* 5.34–35: "but he is unhappy in the total result, because he cannot represent a whole figure."

2 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.2.12–13: "the greatest qualities of an orator are inimitable: his talent, invention, force, fluency, everything in fact that is not taught in the textbooks."

to see his student only grasp with difficulty what he could comprehend in a moment when he was a student. *Quod enim ipse celeriter arripuit, id cum tarde percipi videt, discruciatur* [Cic. *For Roscius*].[3]

There is nothing new in the composition of painters without genius and nothing unique in their expressions. They are so sterile that, after having copied others for a long time, they finally begin to copy themselves. When we see the pictures that they have promised, we guess most of the figures in the work. The habit of copying others leads us to copy ourselves. The idea of what we have painted is always more present to our minds than the ideas of what others have painted. It is the former that suggests itself to painters who look in their memories, rather than in their imaginations, for the compositions and figures of their pictures. Some, like Bassano,[4] indulge themselves in an open repetition of their own works. Others, wishing to hide their self-plagiarizing, reproduce in a scene their disguised, but not unrecognizable, figure. This makes their theft even more odious. The public regards a work in its possession as its personal property. The public is displeased that it has to buy a second time something that it thought that it had already paid for by its praise.

Since it is easier to follow in the steps of another than to blaze new trails, an artist without genius soon reaches the level of excellence that he is capable of reaching. They soon reach the height specific to each person, and then grow no more. His first efforts are often as beautiful as the works of his mature period. We have seen painters without genius who have, by the art of asserting themselves, become popular for a time. Such painters perform worse during their prime than they had during their youth. Their masterpieces are in the countries where they studied. It seems that they would have lost half of their virtue by crossing the Alps. Indeed, on returning to Paris, these artists do not find it as easy as it was in Rome to steal bits, and even entire figures, to enrich their compositions. Their pictures are impoverished when they are no longer able to study at any time, in works of the great masters, the head, the foot, the pose, and sometimes the arrangement that they needed.

I would happily compare the showcase of ancient and modern masterpieces that makes Rome the most august city in the universe to those shops where a huge quantity of precious stones is displayed. Whatever profusion of precious

3 Cicero, *For Quintus Roscius the Actor* 11.31: "For when he sees that which he grasped quickly is understood slowly, he is tormented."

4 Du Bos refers to Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1517–1592), painter of the Venetian school influenced by Titian. Although he is regarded as an excellent painter, he painted many landscapes and genre pieces in the late 1560s and these works developed landscapes that had featured in his earlier religious paintings.

stones is displayed, how many one brings home depends on the amount of money one had to make purchases. Similarly, one profits as substantially from all of the masterpieces of Rome only in proportion to the genius one has to appreciate them. Le Sueur never visited Rome, and only saw from afar, that is to say, in copies, the riches of this capital of the fine arts. Still, he profited more from these riches than many of the painters who boast of stay of several years at the foot of the Capitol. Similarly, a young poet profits from reading Virgil and Horace only in proportion to the brightness of his genius, so to speak, in proportion to the clarity with which he studies the ancients.

People born without a determinate genius, people able to do everything, should apply themselves to the arts and sciences in which the most able are those who know the most. These are professions in which imagination, or the art of creating, is as harmful as it is necessary in poetry and painting.

CHAPTER 7

Geniuses Are Limited.

The only men capable of great success are those born with genius that is dedicated to a particular art or profession. But these professions and arts are the only things at which they can succeed. As soon as they leave their sphere, they become less than medicore. We would no longer see them display their dynamic mind or intelligence, unless they do what they were born to do.

Not only do the men of whom I speak excel in only one profession, but they are also usually limited to excelling in only some of the categories into which their profession sub-divides. "It is almost impossible," Plato says, "that the same man excels in works of a different type. Of all poetic imitations, tragedy and comedy are those which resemble one another most. But the same poet cannot succeed in both equally. Actors who recite tragedies are not the same as those who perform in comedies" [Book 3 of the *Republic*].[1] Painters who excelled at painting the human soul and expressing every passion were mediocre colourists. Others made blood circulate through the flesh of their figures, but they did not know the art of expression as well as even mediocre craftsmen in the Roman School. We have seen many Dutch painters who are gifted with genius for artistic technique, and who above all have a marvellous talent for imitating the effects of *chiaroscuro* in a small, enclosed space. This talent requires of them a singular patience of mind, one which allows them to focus on the same work for a long time without getting frustrated, which happens to men with a more volatile temperament when they see their efforts repeatedly fail. Over and over, and often without any pay-off, these phlegmatic painters had the perseverance to seek out the tints, semi-tints, and every diminution of colour necessary for softening the objects' colours. They also learned to paint light itself.[2] The magic of *chiaroscuro* enchants us. Shading is no better rendered in nature than in their paintings. But these painters

1 Plato, *Republic* 3.395a: "'Still less, then, will he be able to combine the practice of any worthy pursuit with the imitation of many things and the quality of a mimic; since, unless I mistake, the same men cannot practice well at once even the two forms of imitation that appear most nearly akin, as the writing of tragedy and comedy? Did you not just now call these two imitations?' 'I did, and you are right in saying that the same men are not able to succeed in both, nor yet to be at once good rhapsodists and actors.' 'True.'"

2 Du Bos is describing the style of art known as *chiaroscuro*, or 'light-dark.' This style employs strong contrasts between light and dark colours in oil painting. It is exemplified especially in

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_062

have failed in other, no less important areas of art. Lacking creative expression, incapable of rising above nature they see before them, they paint only base passions and nature at its most ordinary. The setting of their paintings is a shop, a guardhouse, or a peasant's kitchen. Their heroes are low-lifes. Those Dutch painters, of whom I speak, who dared to paint historical pictures made admirable *chiaroscuro*, but the rest was ridiculous. Their figures' clothing was extravagant, and their expressions were at the same time both base and comical. They painted Ulysses without finesse, Susanna without modesty, and Scipio[3] without a single mark of nobility or courage. The paintbrushes of these austere artists stripped their famous figures of their recognizable characters. With the exception of painters from the School of Antwerp,[4] Dutchmen knew the value of local colours well, but they could not achieve what painters from the School of Venice could do.[5] A colourist's talent such as Titian demands invention, and it depends more on a fertile imagination for finding the right mix of colours, than on the stubborn perseverance to make the same thing ten times over.

Even though he was born in Brabant, we can mention Teniers among the painters to whom I refer, because his genius led him to work more in line with Dutch taste than that of his compatriots and contemporaries, Rubens and Van Dyck. For commonplace subjects, no painter has better succeeded than Teniers: his paintbrush was excellent. He understood *chiaroscuro* very well, and he surpassed his contemporaries in local colour. But when he tried to make historical

---

the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Caravaggio. Using this artistic technique, artists would gradually degrade the light areas of the painting until they could produce a strong contrast in colour.

3 Ulysses, Susanna and Scipio were commonly depicted figures in painting. Ulysses is the Latin name of the Greek hero Odysseus. Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey* features Odysseus as the main hero, and accordingly his story was (and is) well known. Ulysses/Odysseus is depicted by many artists, including Claude Lorrain (1605–1682) (1644) and Pellegrino Tibaldi (1527–1596) (1550–1551). Susanna refers to the story of a Hebrew wife, falsely accused of promiscuity, which appears in the Book of Daniel. Her story, as well as paintings depicting the event, is often called *Susanna and the Elders*. She is depicted in paintings by Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556) (1517), Guido Reni (1620), Rubens (1608), Van Dyck (1621–1622), and Tintoretto (1555–1556), among others. Scipio is a reference to an episode relayed by Livy about the Roman general Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War. Also widely depicted, there are paintings of this story by Van Dyck (1621), Nicolas Poussin (1645), and many others.

4 The Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp was founded in 1663 by painter David Teniers. David Teniers the Elder (1582–1649) was a Flemish painter, who came from a family that produced many artists, including his son David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690).

5 The Venetian School of Art was founded in the 15th century by Giorgione and Titian, who apprenticed in the workshop of Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1430–1516). Bellini ushered in the colour revolution, for which the Venetian school was renowned.

paintings, Teniers was less than mediocre. We recognize the pastiches, of which he made many, by the silly style of the central figures' heads in his paintings. Paintings made by an epigone, who imitates the hand, the style of composition, and the colouring of another painter under whose name he wants to produce his own work, are commonly called 'pastiches.'

In the Gallery of the Prince de la Tour in Brussels,[6] we see huge historical paintings made from the cartoons of a hanging tapestry representing the history of the Lombard Torriani, from which the House of Thurn und Taxis descended.[7] The first paintings are done by Teniers, who left his son to complete the rest. There is nothing more mediocre in terms of composition and expression.

Fontaine[8] was certainly born with a lot of poetic genius. But his talent was for tales and even more for fables, which he treated with a cheerful erudition which this genre of writing had never before seemed capable. When Fontaine wrote comedies, the hissing of the orchestra was always the loudest. We know the outcome of his operas. Every genre of poetry demands a particular talent, and nature scarcely knows how to give an eminent talent to a man that does not come at the expense of other talents. Far from being surprised that Fontaine made terrible comedies, we should be surprised if he had made excellent ones. If Poussin coloured as well as Bassano, he would be no less admirable among painters as Julius Caesar is among heroes. Among all the Romans, it was Caesar who should have had the greatest honours of humanity, if only he had been just.

It is equally important among noble artists of whom I speak to identify the genres of poetry and painting to which their talents destine them, and to confine themselves to the genre for which they were born. Art can only perfect the *aptitude* or talent that we have had since birth, but it cannot provide the talent that nature has denied. Art contributes a great deal to natural talent, but only when we study the art for which we are born. *Caput est artis decere quod facias. Ita* [id] *neque sine arte, neque totum arte tradi potest*, Quintilian says [*Instit.*

6 This appears to be a reference to a house belonging to the Prince La Tour de Taxis, located near the gate of Laecke in Brussels. See J.B. Romberg, *Brussels and its Environs; or, An accurate account of every object that can be interesting to strangers both in the city and its vicinity* (Brussels: 1824), 7.

7 The Torriani family is one of a number of powerful families from the province of Lombardy in Italy from the 13th century on. The family to which Du Bos refers still exists under the name Thurn und Taxis, the German translation of the French name de La Tour et Tassis, which in turn originated in the Italian name Della Torre e Tasso.

8 Jean de la Fontaine (1621–1695), French poet, best known for writing fables.

bk. 9].[9] Such a painter ends up lost in the crowd. He could have been ranked among famous painters, had he not let himself be distracted by blind emulation, which made him acquire in the genres of paintings for which he was not born, and which made him neglect the genres of painting which were more appropriate for him. The works he tried to make were, so to speak, of a superior class. But did he not want to be one of the leading artists among his fellow citizens, rather than the worst history painter? Did he not want to be known as one of the best portrait-makers of his time, rather than as a lamentable arranger of mean and distorted figures?

The desire to be considered a universal genius diminishes artists. In general, when we evaluate an artist, we pay as much attention to his mediocre works as we do his great ones. He runs the risk of being defined as an artist in terms of the former. People could have been considered great writers had they simply written less! If Martial[10] had left us only the hundred epigrams that people of all nations know by heart, if his book had not contained more than Catullus' book,[11] there would not be such a big difference between this ingenious Roman gentleman and Martial. At least then that great critic would not have dared to compare them, by ceremoniously denouncing a sample of Martial, in order to praise, in a bizarre annual ritual, the poetic shade of Catullus.[12]

Let us return to the broadest limits that nature prescribed to genius and say that the freest genius is one whose limits are less constrained than those of others. *Optimus ille* [*est*] *qui minimis urgetur*.[13] Nothing makes the limits of an artist's genius more obvious than the works from a genre in which he was not born to succeed.

Emulation and study cannot give an artist the power to overcome the natural limits that nature has prescribed for his activity. Work can improve him, but I doubt it would really be able to give him greater breadth than he has. The

9 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.177: "the main thing in art is that what one does should be becoming, this is something which is neither attainable without art nor wholly communicable by art."

10 Marcus Valerius Martialis (ca. AD 40–ca. 104), Roman poet known for his *Epigrams*.

11 Gaius Valerius Catullus (ca. 84-ca. 54 BC), Latin poet. His poetry is preserved in an anthology of 116 *carmina*.

12 A footnote in Nugent's English translation points the reader to "Naugerius, a learned Italian in the sixteenth century." This is a reference to Andrea Navagero (1483–1529), Venetian diplomat and writer. A famous figure, Navagero was depicted in a portrait by Raphael alongside Agostino Beazzano (ca. 1500–1549), humanist writer and poet. Navagero's criticisms of ancient poets can be found in *Lusus, in Carmina quique illustrium poetarum* (1548).

13 Horace, *Satires* 1.3.68–69: "The best is the one burdened with the least faults."

breadth that hard work seems to give to geniuses is only apparent breadth. Art teaches them to conceal their limits, but does not remove them. What happens to people in the science of gaming happens to people of all professions. A man skilled to the highest extent possible for him in a given game advances no further. He will not be improved either by lessons from the best masters or by practice carried on for several years. Hard work and experience make painters and poets produce more correct works, but they cannot make them know how to produce more sublime ones. It cannot make them create works of a quality that goes beyond their natural ability. A genius to whom nature gave only the wings of a turtle dove will never learn to soar like an eagle. As Montaigne said, in studying the works of others: they acquire the talent they have for invention. "The imitation of words, by its own facility, immediately disperses itself through a whole people; but the imitation of inventing and fitly applying those words is of a slower progress" [*Essays* bk. 2. Ch. 5].[14]

Lessons from a skilled music teacher develop our organs and, technically, we can learn to sing. But lessons do little to change anything about the sound and breadth of our natural voice, although they can make it seem sweeter and broader.

As much as the soul remains united with the body, what differentiates our minds is no less real than what differentiates our voices and faces. All philosophers, whatever their sect, agree that the character of the mind comes from the structure of the organs of the brain, which help the soul perform its functions. But it is no more up to us to change the arrangement or configuration of the organs of the brain than it is up to us to change the arrangement or configuration of the muscles and cartilage of our faces and throats. If some sort of physical alteration happens in these organs, it is not due to our will, but a physical change that occurs in our make-up. These organs cannot be changed like other parts of our body can. Minds do not become similar by looking at one another, as voices and faces can. Art does not expand the physical breadth of our voice. It only increases our genius as much as exercise—in which the practice of the art consists—can really change anything in the configuration or arrangement of our organs. Exercise, in fact, changes very little. Art cannot suppress faulty organization, but it teaches us to conceal and augment the natural reach of physical talents that practice makes better.

14 Montaigne, *Essays* 3.5 (Chapter 25 in Cotton edition).

CHAPTER 8

Of Plagiarists. How They Differ from Those Who Put Their Studies to Good Use.

Someone will object that an artist can make up for the shallowness and sterility of his genius by transplanting into his works beauties found in the works of great masters. The advice of his friends could raise him to a level to which the strength of his genius could not carry him.

I reply, with respect to the first point, that an artist was always allowed to draw on the ideas of others, provided that he does not plagiarize.

Plagiarism is representing the work of another as one's own. It is representing as one's own entire verses, on which one has not laboured and for which one deserves no credit. These verses are transplanted from another person's work into one's own. I say that plagiarism is transplanting without difficulty something into our work since, when we take verses from a poet who wrote in a language other than ours, we are not guilty of plagiarism. The verse becomes ours in some measure as a result of the new expression that we have leant to the thought of another that we have appropriated. There is merit in undertaking such a theft because we could not do it without difficulty and without having, at least, the talent for expression. As much skill is needed to succeed in this as was needed in Sparta to steal like a gentleman.[1] To find in one's language the right words and the expressions equivalent to those used by the ancient or modern writer that one translates; to know how to give the turn of phrase that makes you feel the power of the thought and to capture the same images as the original, is not the task of a scholar. Transplanting thoughts from one language to another can only be successful in the hands of those who have, at least, the gift of inventing expressions. So, when they succeed, half of the beauty belongs to the person who has translated the work.

1 In ancient Sparta, at about age 12, Spartan boys were required to live off the land, stealing everything they needed to survive. They were punished, not for stealing, but for being caught stealing.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_063

One scarcely diminishes the merit of Virgil by showing that he had borrowed a lot from Homer.[2] Fulvius Ursinus[3] would have gone to a lot of useless effort if he had only collected all of the passages in which Latin poets imitated Greek poets in order to diminish the reputation of Latin poets. Virgil has, so to speak, acquired title to all of the ideas that he has taken from Homer. He owns them in Latin because of the elegant turn of phrase and precision that he has given them in his language and because of the artistry with which he sets these various pieces in the well-designed building of which he is the architect. Some people flattered themselves that they would diminish the reputation of Boileau by printing, in the form of a commentary at the foot of his text, the verses of Horace and Juvenal that he embedded in his. They deceived themselves. Consider the ancient verses that this poet had transformed into French with such adroitness, and that had made them such integral parts of the verses in which he included them that they seemed the thoughts of one person. These verses do as much honour to Boileau as the verses that are the completely original products of his genius. The original turn of phrase and the boldness of expression, as unconstrained as if they were born in his thought, of his translations display nearly as much creativity as the production of an entirely new thought. This is what made La Bruyère [*Speech to the Académie*][4] say that Boileau appears to create the thoughts of others.

Embellishing works with antique fragments even gives grace to his works. Verses of Horace and Virgil, well translated, and aptly placed in a French poem, have the same effect as antique statues have in the gallery of Versailles. Readers find with pleasure a thought that had previously pleased them in Latin, but in a new form. They are helped a lot if they have the opportunity to recite verses of ancient poetry, in order to compare them with verses of the modern imitator who wants to juxtapose them with the original. Nothing is so small that *amour propre* does not make a big deal about it, when it flatters our pride. Thus, the

2 Homer is the name of the poet supposed to have written the two great epics of ancient Greece, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Although it is thought that these works were given their final form in the late-8th or early-7th century BC, there is much debate about the date in which they found their canonical form.

3 Fulvio Orsini, sometimes known by his Latin name Fulvius Ursinus (1529–1600), Italian humanist, historian, and student of ancient literature.

4 Jean de La Bruyère (1645–1696), French philosopher. La Bruyére's speech was delivered on 15 June 1693 and printed in *Discours, haranges, et autre pieces d'eloquence de messieurs de l'Academie Françoise, et autre beaux Esprits* [Discussions, speeches, and other examples of the eloquence of the gentlemen of the Académie Français, and other excellent minds], vol. 1 (Amsterdam: 1693), 122–137.

authors most highly praised for the creativity of their genius have not distained sometimes to add this type of charm to their works. Was it sterility of imagination that constrained Corneille and La Fontaine to borrow so much from the ancients? Molière has often done the same thing. Though he had a rich stock of his own ideas, he still translated ten lines of Ovid in a row in Act 2 of *The Misanthrope*.[5]

One can draw on the works of poets who have written in living languages as one draws on those of the Greeks and Romans. However, I think that when one uses the works of modern poets, one ought to acknowledge their rights, especially if one takes a lot. I do not approve, for example, of the fact that de La Fosse has taken the plot, the characters, and the main incidents from the tragedy *Manlius* [*Manlius* was performed in 1697][6] from Otway's English play entitled, *Venice Preserv'd* [Performed in 1682][7] without citing this work, from which he had profited so much. All that one can say in defence of de La Fosse is that he was retaliating in his capacity as a Frenchman, since Otway had appropriated the theme, the main characters, and the most beautiful strokes from the *Conjuration de Venise* by the Abbé of Saint-Réal [Published in 1674]. If de La Fosse has taken from Otway something that the Englishman had not borrowed from Saint-Réal, such as the part where Servilius is married, and the catastrophe, this is because he who recaptures a ship that was taken by his enemy is supposed to be the owner of the merchandise that the enemy had added to the cargo of the ship.

Since all painters, so to speak, speak the same language, they may not use famous motifs that other painters have already used, when the works of this painter still exist. Poussin appropriated the idea of the Greek painter who represented Agamemnon with his head veiled at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, in order to capture the excessive sadness of the victim's father. This is in Poussin's painting of Agrippina hiding her face with her hands on the death of Germanicus.[8] The picture of the Greek painter no longer existed when the French painter appropriated it. But Poussin would have been blamed if he had stolen this idea from Raphael or Carracci.

---

5 *The Misanthrope* is the best-known work of Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, 1622–1673), great French playwright. The lines in question are in 2.5.

6 Du Bos refers to *Manlius Capitolinus* (1698), the masterpiece of Antoine de La Fosse, also known as Sieur d'Aubigny (1653 or 1658–1708), French playwright.

7 Thomas Otway (1652–1685), English playwright, best known for his play, *Venice Preserv'd, or a Plot Discover'd* (1682). Ironically, Otway borrowed the plot of his play, one of the most successful English plays of the 1680s, from *Spanish conspiracy against the Republic of Venice* [Conjuration des Espagnols contre la République de Venise] (1674), by César Vichard de Saint-Réal.

8 *The Death of Germanicus* (1627), in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Since there is no merit in stealing a head from Raphael or a figure from Domenichino; since the theft requires no great effort, it is forbidden, on pain of public contempt. But since talent and work are necessary to animate the marble of an ancient figure and to make a statue a living person, and fit it in a scene with other people, we praise the artist who does this. So a painter may use the Apollo Belvedere[9] to represent Perseus or another hero of the time of Perseus, provided that he animates the statue and he is not content to copy it for placement in a picture as it is in its niche. Therefore, painters should give life to such statues before they make them act. This is what Raphael has done. He seems to be a new Prometheus, having stolen the celestial fire to animate statues. I refer those who would like more information about this matter to Ruben's Latin essay concerning the imitation of antique statues.[10] One wishes that this great genius had always put into practice in his works the lessons that he taught in this essay.

Painters who have used the antique in the manner of Raphael, Michelangelo, and some others, may be compared to Virgil, Racine, and Boileau. These poets have used poets, ancient relative to the times when they were writing, just as the illustrious painters I have mentioned have used antique statues. As for painters without verve, they only know how to do one thing: they demand, so to speak, levies on pictures, taxing one at the rate of two heads, demanding an arm from another, and appropriating from the richest a group of figures. They are highwaymen who only frequent Parnassus in order to rob travellers. I would compare them to sewers of *centons*,[11] the most despised of all verse makers. They should avoid falling into the hands of the *barigel* that Boccalini placed on the double mount.[12] He would ruin their reputations.

---

9 A classical statue, recovered in central Italy during the 15th century. It is believed to have been made in the first half of the 2nd century AD and to be a copy of a (lost) Greek bronze by Leochares (fl. 4th century BC).

10 After Rubens' death, a book was found among his papers. It contains remarks on various technical aspects of painting, including perspective and anatomy. Du Bos probably refers to the French translation, *Théorie de la figure humaine, &c., ouvrage traduit du Latin de P.P. Rubens, avec XLIV. planches d'après les desseins de ce célèbre artiste* [Theory of the human figure, etc., a work translated from Latin by P.P. Rubens, with forty-four plates following the drawings of the famous artist] (Paris: 1703–1704).

11 *Centons* are poems entirely made up from lines taken from Homer or Virgil.

12 Du Bos refers to the book *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1612), by Trajano Boccalini (1556–1613), Italian satirist. The title literally means "Newspaper from Parnassus" and was translated into English as *The Politicke Touchstone* (1674) by Henry Carey, Earl of Monmouth. A *barigel* is the captain of an irregular Italian constabulary. The 'double mount' refers to Mount Parnassus. Consequently, Du Bos is saying that the imaginary captain who polices Mount Parnassus will prosecute the poets and painters in question.

There is a lot of difference between carrying off the contents of a painter's art gallery or appropriating the *modus operandi* of an artist and including in one's portfolio a part of his figures. A person without genius, unlike Raphael, is incapable of converting into his own work the great and unique things that he notices. Without grasping the underlying principles, he is content to copy what is before his eyes. Thus, he will take one of the figures, but will not understand that he needs to treat a figure of his own invention in the same style. The person of genius grasps how the craftsman has created. He sees him work, so to speak, by looking at his work and adopts his manner of working. He carries off his loot only in his imagination.

The advice of intelligent people can prevent painters and poets from making errors but, since they do not suggest expressiveness or artistry of style, could not provide genius. They can straighten the tree but they cannot make it bear fruit. This advice is only good for correcting faults. It is mainly good for correcting the plans for a work of considerable size. I am supposing that the artists provide a sketch of the plan and that the consultants study it and make it as present to their minds as if they had created it themselves. *Diligenter legendum est*, said Quintilian, [...] *ac paene ad scribendi sollicitudinem. Nec per partes* modo *scrutanda omnia, sed perlectus liber utique ex integro* ***resumendus***.[13] In this manner, Boileau gave Racine frequently useful advice. What can a poet expect to gain from reading aloud a work that already exists in a final draft besides having some word straightened out or some sentiment corrected? Suppose that we could, after a single listening, give good advice to an artist about the structure of this work. Would he be complaisant enough to follow this advice? Would he be patient enough to completely revise an already completed work, which he had set aside?

The most fortunate geniuses are not born great artists. They are only born capable of becoming one. Only by dint of hard work do they elevate themselves to the point of perfection that they are capable of attaining:

> *Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam*
> *Rectique cultus pectora roborant.*
> [*Ode* 4. bk. 4][14]

13 This is a slight misquotation of Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.20: "they should be read thoroughly, with almost as much care as we devote to writing. We must do more than examine everything bit by bit; once read, the book must invariably be taken up again from the beginning."

14 Horace, *Odes* 4.4.33–34: "But training develops innate powers, and the inculcation of what is right strengthens the heart."

said Horace. But our impatience to create goads us on. We already want to write a poem when we are scarcely capable of writing some lines. Instead of beginning to work for ourselves, we want to work for the public. Such is the fate of most young poets. But their genius is not well known to themselves, since they still do not have a formed style, one that has a character suitable to their genius and able to express the ideas of their imaginations. Consequently, they go astray, choosing topics that are not adapted to their talents and imitating, in their first works, the style, the turn of phrase, and the way of thinking of others. For example, Racine [*Enemy Brothers*][15] wrote his first tragedy in the style of Corneille, though his talent was not for writing tragedy as Corneille had done. Racine would never have been able to carry it off if, to use this expression, he had continued to walk in the buskins of his predecessor. It is natural for young poets, instead of imitating the aspect of nature that their genius shows to them, imitate a side that others have already imitated. This coerces their talent, and tries to make it keep to the road that others have followed with success. At first they make only mediocre works: elder brothers usually unworthy of their younger siblings.

Young people are driven by a desire to emulate, excited by the energy of their youth, and dragged along by a genius impatient to present itself to the public. So it is useless to attempt to get them to wait until they know what type of genius they possess and they have perfected it. It would be vain to say that they can better earn the astonishment of the public by waiting or that the public will have more respect for them if they have never seen their juvenilia. Unexpected masterpieces, against which envy has not had time to plot, enjoy a greater success than works anticipated for a long time. A long-anticipated work finds its rivals on their guard and the reputation of work's author may be shaped by a mediocre poem or picture. Nothing is capable of restraining the ardour of a young person, seduced by vanity, most of which is attributable to his youth. Moreover, as Cicero said, *Prudentia non cadit in hanc aetatem* [*Pro Caelio*].[16]

These premature works remain, but it is unfair that they damage the reputation of illustrious artists. Is an apprenticeship not necessary in all professions? All apprenticeships consist in making mistakes so that one may become capable of not making any more. We would never blame someone who writes good Latin for the barbarisms and solecisms of which his first exercises are certainly full. Painters and poets have the misfortune of performing their apprentice-

15 This play is usually known as *La Thébaïde* or (in English) *The Thebaid* (1664). The play was not successful.

16 "Modesty does not occur during this age." This is a misquotation of Cicero, *For Marcus Caelius* 31.76. The original text has *sapientia* (wisdom) rather than *prudentia* (modesty).

ships in public, but at least the public does not need to keep a reckoning of the mistakes that they have seen painters and poets make, when it evaluates them, after they have become great artists.

Artists without genius, as suited to being the students of Poussin as the students of Titian, remain all of their lives on the road on which chance has placed them. In contrast, artists gifted with genius see, when they happen to be lost, that the road that they have taken is not the one to which they are suited. They abandon it in order to take another. They leave their teacher's road and strike out on a new one. By 'teachers,' I mean here works as well as people. Raphael, dead for two centuries, can still take on students. Our young artist, gifted with genius, develops for himself a practice of imitating nature. He develops this practice on the basis of maxims resulting from reflection on his work and on the work of others. Every day adds new insights to those that he previously acquired. He does not produce an elegy or a picture without becoming a better poet or a better painter and, in time, surpasses those who may have been more fortunate in their teachers or their examples. Everything provides the opportunity for useful reflection. He gains as much from studying in the middle of a field as he does in his studio. In short, his merit reaches the highest level that it can and remains there, until age weakens his body and his trembling hand lets down his still vigorous imagination. Genius is the last thing to age. The hoariest elders arouse themselves and become young men when they address things related to the profession for which they have a genius. Speak with an aged military officer and he is heated by inspiration. One would say that he is seated on the tripod.[17] He speaks like a man of forty and he finds examples and expressions with an ease that gives sparkling enthusiasm to his thought and speech.

Several eyewitnesses have told me that Poussin was, from the point of view of imagination, a young painter until the end of his life. His virtue outlived the dexterity of his hand and he still created when he no longer had the ability necessary to realize his creations. In this regard, poets are not absolutely like painters. The layout of a plan for a lengthy work, if it is good for anything, needs to be in the head of the creator and cannot be produced without the aid of memory. Thus, this plan must be affected by the weakening of this faculty, which happens too commonly in old age. The memories of the elderly are inaccurate with respect to new things. This is where the faults come from in the late

17 In ancient Greece, oracles delivered their pronouncements while seated on a tripod. The tripod, usually made from bronze or gold, was a regular gift exchanged in ancient Greece. The most famous tripod belonged to the Pythia—the priestess who delivered the oracles of Apollo at Delphi.

tragedies of Corneille. The events are poorly prepared and often characters are placed in situations in which, in the natural course of things, they have nothing good or natural to say. Still, we recognize from time to time the artistry of style, the elevation of thought, and even the fertile genius of Corneille.

CHAPTER 9

Obstacles That Slow Progress in Young Artists.

All geniuses reveal themselves well. But they never arrive at the degree of perfection that nature made them capable of attaining. Progress is stopped midcourse. A young painter cannot achieve all the progress of which he is capable if his hand does not keep pace with his imagination. It is not enough for painters to imagine noble ideas or elegant compositions. To find the most emotional expressions, their hands must be trained to reflect the hundreds of ways they might be able to draw with precision the line their imagination demands. We do nothing well, says Fresnoy in his poem on painting, if our hand is not able to put on the canvas the beauties our soul produces.

> *Sic nihil ars opera manuum privata supremum*
> *Exequitur, sed languet iners uti vincta lacertos;*
> *Dispositumque typum non lingua pinxit Apelles*.
> [*The Art of Paint*. Vers. 56][1]

Genius has its arms tied, in other words, in an artist whose hand is not free. The same can be said about the eye. A painter's eye must become accustomed to judge on the spot, with simultaneous confidence and ease, the effect that a certain combination or opposition of colours should make, or the effect that a figure with a certain stature should make in a group, or the effect that a certain group should make in a painting, after the painting is coloured. If imagination does not have at its disposal a hand and eye capable of supporting it to its liking, the most beautiful ideas that inflame the imagination will produce only a crude painting. Even the artist who painted it disdains it, such is the extent to which he finds the work of his hand worse than that of his mind.

The study needed to perfect hand and eye does not consist in giving a few distracted hours to interrupted work. This study demands complete attention

1 Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting*, trans. William Mason (York: 1782):
> Nor the skill'd hand explains the meaning heart
> In chains of sloth such talents droop confin'd
> 'Twas not by words Apelles charm'd mankind.

Fresnoy wrote a Latin verse text on the art of painting called *The Art of Painting* [De arte graphica]. The work enjoyed popularity and saw a number of translations, including one by Roger de Piles into French, followed by the poet John Dryden and then Mason into English.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_064

and continuous perseverance over many years. We know the saying defending painters who spend an entire day without a single stroke of the paintbrush, a saying that commonly applies to all professions, as much as it is considered sensible: *Nulla dies sine linea*.[2]

The only time in life appropriate for training the eye and the hand is when our organs, both internal and external, are developing. It is the time between ages fifteen and thirty. During these years, organs easily acquire all the habits made possible by their original configuration. But if one loses these precious years, if one lets them pass by without taking advantage, the malleability of our organs slips away, and no amount of effort can bring it back. Although the tongue is a more pliant organ than the hand, a foreign language learned at age thirty is still pronounced badly.

Unfortunately for us, those precious years are those when we are most easily distracted from serious endeavour. It is when we are just beginning to have confidence in our own ideas, which are merely the starting-points of prudence. We have already lost deference to others' advice, which served in place of virtue for children. And our resolve, weak as our reason, is not evidence of bad taste. Horace defined an adolescent:

> *Monitoribus asper,*
> *Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus aeris,*
> *Sublimis cupidusque, et amata relinquere pernix.*
> [*Art of Poet.* v. 5][3]

Beyond this, everything at this age is an occasion for indulging our pleasure. A young man's tastes are his passions, and his passions are his furies. The fervency of age gives him many at once, and it is too much to ask if reason, still in its infancy, can act as mistress from time to time.

I should also add a reflection: the genius of poetry and that of painting never reside in a man of frigid temperament and lazy mood. The same constitution

---

2 Pliny, *Natural History* 35.84: "Not a day without a line." Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23–790), known in English as Pliny the Elder, Roman Scientist. This was a very famous saying in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Pliny's quotation refers to Apelles, to whom the previous quotation from Du Fresnoy referred. Apelles (4th century BC), ancient Greek painter, best known for his portrait of Alexander the Great. These words do not actually occur in Pliny. Instead he says, "*Apelli fuit alioqui perpetua consuetudo numquam tam occupatum diem agendi, ut non lineam ducendo exerceret artem, quod ab eo in proverbium venit*." "Moreover it was a regular custom with Apelles never to let a day of business to be so fully occupied that he did not practise his art by drawing a line, which has passed from him into a proverb."

3 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 5.163–165: "peevish with his counsellors, slow to make needful provision, lavish of money, spirited, of strong desires, but swift to change his fancies."

that makes a painter or a poet inclines him to the most intense passions. The history of great artists, whether in poetry or in painting, who have not shipwrecked on the reefs of which I speak, is filled with dangers only narrowly escaped. Some of them were smashed to pieces, but none ran aground.

I do not know what caused the Bishop of Alba to surpass himself in his depiction of the fretfulness and rapture of a young poet tyrannized by weakness fighting against his genius, distracting him, despite himself, from the concerns for which he was born.

> *Saepe etenim tectos immitit in ossibus ignes*
> *Versat amor, mollisque et intus flamma medullas;*
> *Nec miserum patitur Vatum meminisse, nec undae*
> *Castaliae, tantum suspirat vulnere caeco,*
> *Ante oculos simulachra volant noctesque diesque*
> *Nuncia virginei vultus quem perditus ardet.*
> *Nec potis est alio fixam traducere mentem*
> *Saucius.*
>
> [Vida *Poet*. bk. 1][4]

Not even the essence of water from Hippocrene could make them extinguish these sorts of fires.[5]

Passion for wine is even more dangerous than the other. It wastes a lot of time, and it also places a young artist out of sorts for making good use of what he has. Excessive drinking is not one of those vices corrected by age. After several years, it deprives the mind of part of its vigour and the body of part of its strength. A man addicted to wine is miserable when he is not drinking,

---

4 Marco Girolamo Vida, *On the Art of Poetry*, 62–63:

> Oft hidden fires on all his vitals prey,
> Devour the youth, and melt his soul away
> By slow degrees, blot out his golden dreams,
> The tuneful poets and Castilian streams.
> Struck with a secret wound, he weeps and sighs,
> In every thought the darling phantoms rise;
> The fancied charmer swims before his sight,
> His theme all day, his vision all night;
> The wandering object takes up all his care,
> Nor can he quit the imaginary fair.

Marco Girolamo Vida (ca. 1485–1566), humanist poet, as well as the Bishop of Alba from 1532.

5 Hippocrene is a spring on Mount Helicon that features prominently in Greek mythology. It is associated with poetic inspiration and was considered sacred by the ancient muses.

and he has no more wit than what the digestion of his stomach gives him, which wears out before its time.

When Horace speaks seriously, he says that the young man who wants to make himself skillful needs to be temperate. *Abstinuit venere et vino* [*Art of Poet.*].[6] Petronius, the least austere of writers, requires a young man who wants to succeed in his efforts to be sober. *Frugalitatis lege palleat exacta*.[7] In speaking of poets of his day who composed great works, Juvenal says that they abstained from wine even on those days customarily set aside for fine dining.

> [*Tunc*] *utile multis*
> *pallere et vinum toto nescire Decembri.*
> [Juven. *Sat.* 7][8]

Let me not be accused of summoning before exceedingly severe judges the young men that I want to put on trial.

Finally, since success cannot always follow a young painter's haste, he may from time to time adopt a dislike of hard work, which he does not see bearing fruit that satisfies him. Natural impatience at that age makes us immediately harvest what we have just planted. The attraction of work to which our genius invites us helps us get over our dislikes and resist distractions. But it is even better when desire for making money motivates the impulse of genius. For a young man whose genius destines him to become a painter, we hope he finds an occasion when he must regard his art as his means of establishment, and recognizes that his worldly worth is measured by the ability he achieves in that

---

6 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 412: "He has kept aloof from wine and women". For context, this is the passage: "Often it is asked whether a praiseworthy poem be due to Nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league. He who in the race-course craves to reach the longed-for goal, has borne much and done much as a boy, has sweated and shivered, has kept aloof from wine and women."

7 Petronius, *Satyricon* 5.1.3: "Let him first perfect his character by the rigid law of frugality." Gaius Petronius Arbiter (ca. AD 27–66) was a member of the Roman court, and the supposed author of this prosimetric Menippean satire. Du Bos has misquoted the line, which should be: "*prius mores frugalitatis lege poliat exacta.*" '*Palleat*' is found in manuscripts, which may explain Du Bos' use. '*Poliat,*' nominally accepted in modern editions, was a correction originally suggested by Nicolas Heinsius. Instead the line would read "let him go pale with the rigid law of frugality." This naturally leads to the following Juvenal quotation.

8 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.96–97: "In those days many found it worth their while to turn pale and go without wine for the whole of December." Du Bos' quotation is incorrect; he supplies '*fuit*' for '*tunc.*'

art. If a young man's fortune, far from leading him to work hard, distracts him from work with the foolishness of his age, what can we expect of him if he does not spend time developing or forming his organs? Work frequently interrupted, and distracted even more often, will not perfect an artist. Indeed, the success of our work depends almost as much on our disposition, when we apply it, it depends almost as much on what we do before sitting down to work, and on what we planned to make, after we have finished it, as on the time spent working. When the power of genius brings our young painter back to serious study of his art, because the wantonness of his youth has passed, his hand and eye are no longer capable of improvement. If, after having imagined them, he wants to make good works of art, he should let them be painted by someone else.

Poets, for whom apprenticeship is not as difficult as that of painters, always find themselves able to fulfill their destiny. The first flames of genius are sufficient for learning the rules of poetry; it is not from ignorance of the rules that so many people contravene them. Most who fail to follow the rules know them well, but lack the talent for putting the rules into practice.

True, a poet may be put off giving us major works because of the difficulty caused by the organization of their plot. Perseverance is not a virtue of young people. If they intensively apply themselves to the most laborious and difficult exercises, it is on the condition that the work does not drag on for a long time. It is thus fortunate for society that young poets are drawn to hard work by the need to make a living.

By 'the need to make a living' I do not mean 'the need to subsist.' Extreme poverty that forces one to work for a scrap of bread will only lead a man of genius astray. Without consulting his talents and pressured by need, he is drawn to genres of poetry more lucrative than others. In place of composing ingenious allegories and excellent satires, he will write terrible pieces for the theatre: the theatre in France is the Peru of poets.[9]

Poetic enthusiasm is not one of those talents given out of fear of dying from hunger. If, as Persius said, who named hunger the father of industry, *Ingenii largitor venter*,[10] an empty stomach expands the mind, and not just that of writers.

---

9 Up until the 18th century, Peru's silver mines were a great source of wealth for the Spanish crown. In comparing the French theatre to Peru, Du Bos says that it is possible to make a lot of money in the French theatre.

10 Persius, *Satires* Prologue 10–11: "An empty stomach is the teacher of art and giver of wit." The longer quotation translated here is: *Magister artis ingeniique largitor venter*. Aulus Persius Flaccus (34–62 AD), Roman satirical poet.

Horace a bu son saoul quand il voit les Menades.[11]

Boileau claims, following Juvenal. Indeed, as this Latin poet explains very well, to put one's feet on Mount Olympus is to enter the affairs of the gods, and to give celebrations to the goddesses. It is not to get involved with some poor slob who does not know where to get his next meal. Juvenal adds that if Virgil had not had life's commodities, then his hydras, which were such terrible monsters, would have been nothing but ordinary grass snakes. The fury that carries rage into the bosoms of Turnus and Amata[12] would have been nothing other, to speak in our style, than a rage equal to the tranquility of Eumenides in the opera *Isis*.[13]

Magnae mentis opus, nec de lodice paranda
Attonitae, currus et equos faciesque Deorum
Aspicere et qualis Rutulum confundat Erinnys.
Nam si Virgilio puer et tolerabile desit
Hospitium, caderent omnes a crinibus hydri.
[Juven. *Sat.* 7][14]

Extreme need degrades the mind, and genius, reduced by misery to write, loses half of its vigour.

---

11 Boileau, *The Poetic Art* Chant 4, 50: "When Horace saw Bacchus, his stomach was full." See Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Art Poétique de Boileau-Despréaux, Nouvelle Edition*, ed. L'Abbé Claude-Joseph Drioux (Paris: 1887).

12 In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Amata was the wife of Latinus, the king of the Latins. Turnus was the king of the Rutuli, and Aeneas' great enemy. At stake was the marital hand of Lavinia, Amata's daughter, who had been promised to Turnus. When Aeneas and Turnus fought for Lavinia, and Turnus lost and was killed in battle, Amata committed suicide. Their story, from *Aeneid* 7, was depicted in many paintings in antiquity and the Renaissance.

13 The Eumenides, or "the Gracious Ones," feature in the final book of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. In this story, Orestes is pursued by the Furies (the Erinyes), three goddesses responsible for vengeance. In response, the goddess Athena intervenes to arrange a legal trial for Orestes, rather than allowing the Furies to take their vengeance through violence. As a consequence of the trial and the legal vote not to kill Orestes, the Furies are re-named "the Eumenides" by Athena. The trial was meant to set a precedent to seek vengeance through legal means. This story was depicted in the opera to which Du Bos refers, *Isis*, written by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), an Italian composer working in France.

14 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.66–70: "A great soul, not one perplexed about buying a blanket, is needed for visions of chariots and horses and the gods' faces and the kind of Fury that drove the Rutulian crazy. After all, if Virgil hadn't had a slave boy and decent lodgings, all the snakes would have fallen from the Fury's hair."

On the other hand, pleasures distract poets from working as much as need does. True, Lucan composed *Pharsalia*[15] despite all the distractions that occurred following a period of great opulence. In gardens decorated with marble, he received compliments from his friends on the success of his poem; but a single example does not prove anything. Of all poets of great repute, as far as I recall Lucan is the only one who from youth was able to live a life of abundance. Everyone will agree when I say that Molière would not have taken the trouble to make himself produce *Les Femmes Scavantes*, nor, after becoming qualified to do, so to write that comedy, had he owned an estate of a hundred thousand *livres* per year from age twenty. In the witty words of our King Charles IX,[16] I believe I have found the situation one wishes for a young poet. The prince said, using Latin, which good manners allow polite society to mix into conversation: "It must be that horses and poets are well-fed, but not fattened up." *Equi et poetae alendi sunt, non saginandi*.[17] One should forgive the comparison on the basis of the great passion men had in those days for their horses: fashion excuses that. The desire to increase his wealth excites a poet who finds himself in that situation, as long as need neither debases his mind nor requires him to chase after a vile salary, as did the mercenary writers of so many dramas who barely controlled the plots of their writings, fixated only on the money that would be their reward.

> *Gestit enim nummum in loculos dimittere, post hoc*
> *Securus, cadat an recto stet fabula talo*.
> [*Horat. Ep*. bk. 1.2][18]

Since our poetic technique, so difficult for those who want to produce only excellent verse, is easy for those who are content to write mediocre works, we have a greater number of bad poets than painters. Anyone who has some glimmer of inspiration, or some tincture of writing ability, wants to try his hand at writing poetry. Unhappily for poets, they judge all new poetry with the severity of a rival. Poets have long complained of their many rivals who, because of the

15 Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, known as Lucan (39–65 AD), was a Spanish-born poet who wrote an epic poem in Latin called *Pharsalia*, or *On the Civil War*. *Pharsalia* is a reference to the Battle of Pharsalus, which took place in 48 BC in northern Greece, during which Caesar defeated Pompey.

16 Charles IX (1550–1574), King of France from 1560 until his death.

17 As Du Bos suggests, this mot is attributed to Charles IX. See, William John Thoms, *The Book of the Court* (London: 1838), 274.

18 Horace, *Epistles* 1.2 175–176: "Yes, he is eager to drop a coin into his pocket and, that done, he cares not whether his play fall or stand square on its feet."

ease of poetic technique, take up the art. "Whoever is not a pilot should not take a seat at the rudder," Horace proclaimed. "Those who have not studied the simples should not get mixed up in making medicine. Only physicians should prescribe bleeding to patients. Even the lowest trades are not practiced until an apprenticeship is completed. But everyone, skilled and unskilled, tries their hand at poetry."

> *Navem agere ignarus navis timet: Abrotonum aegro*
> *Non audet, nisi qui didicit, dare; quod Medicorum est*
> *Promittunt Medici; tractant fabrilia fabri,*
> *Scribimus indocti doctique poemata.*
> [Horace. *Ep*. bk. 1.2][19]

The most inept poets are those who compose with the greatest ease. From them emerge so many tiresome works that give such a bad name to 'the poet' and prevent deserving people from being given that honorific title.

I recall what Boileau said to Racine regarding the ease of writing poetry. Racine had just come from writing his *Tragedy of Alexander*, when he became friends with the author of *The Art of Poetry*. In speaking of his work, Racine told him that he found it exceedingly easy to write poetry. "I would like to teach you to take pains writing poetry," Boileau responded, "and you have enough talent to learn it quickly." Racine said that Boileau kept his word.

But these pains and obstacles are not enough to make a young man with the vocation of Apollo,[20] eager to make his name and his fortune, turn away from poetry. He will arrive, perhaps a little earlier, perhaps a little later, at the steps of Parnassus, which he can climb; but the use he will make of his abilities will depend a great deal on the moment his star is born. If he arrives in bad times, without the protection of Augustus or Maecenas, his productivity will be neither as frequent nor as voluminous than if he had been born in an era more favourable to the arts and sciences. Motivated by emulation and encouraged by the attention Augustus gave to his poetry, Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*, spending a vast amount of time writing that lengthy poem. Despite the taste his genius

19 Horace, *Epistles* 2.1 114–117: "A man who knows nothing of a ship fears to handle one; no one dares to give southernwood to the sick unless he has learnt its use; doctors undertake a doctor's work; carpenters handle carpenters' tools: but, skilled or unskilled, we scribble poetry, all alike." (Du Bos cites the incorrect book and passage.)

20 According to Horace, *Odes* 4.6, the god Apollo provided three gifts to pursue a poetic vocation: the art of inspiration (*spiritus*), the art of song (*artem carminis*), and the name of the poet (*nomen poetae*).

gave for this sort of work, it must have often tired him to the point of weariness. If he had lived during a time without Augustus or Maecenas or his competitors, Virgil would have been destined to cultivate his talent by the impulse of his genius and by the desire to distinguish himself. He would have been capable of composing the *Aeneid*, but it is easy to imagine he would not have had the stamina needed to complete such a long work. Perhaps we would only have had some *Eclogues*, which would have seeped out of an abundant vein, and only a sketch of one or two books of the *Aeneid*.

Great artists are not those for whom productions come cheap. Their inaction often arises from the fear that they have of the pain of works worthy of them, when it appears that laziness is what keeps them idle. Like sailors who set foot on shore after having, to use an ancient expression, anticipated death in each approaching wave, they are put off exposing themselves to the dangers of the sea for some time. Similarly, a good poet who knows how much it costs him to complete a tragedy does not volunteer to begin another. He must rest for a while. After being exhausted from hard work, before he can put himself back into it, he must become bored by idleness.

A poet cannot set out a sketch of a work of any length without a great deal of hard work and focus. The work of laying down and polishing proper verses is tiresome. It is impossible that the serious focus demanded by the minutiae of his work will not soon exhaust him. But he must carry on over a significant time. I call as witnesses poets for whom perseverance for this labour is lacking. True, poets find a noticeable pleasure in the enthusiasm of composition. Completely elevated by ideas excited in an overheated imagination, the soul takes no notice of the effort required to produce them, unaware of the pain that will be caused by fatigue and exhaustion that follow the composition.

> *Neque idem unquam*
> *Aeque est beatus ac poema cum scribit,*
> *Tam gaudet in se*.
> [Catull. *Epigr*. 20][21]

Those who compose verses without being poets are happy with what they write, but more from delirium than real enthusiasm. Like Pygmalion,[22] most fall in love with their shapeless, languid productions, leaving them unrevised,

21 Catullus, *Carmen* 22.15–16: "yet this guy is never so happy as when composing verse, thinks he's so marvellous."

22 Pygmalion is a character in ancient Greek poetry. The reference here is apt: in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid depicts Pygmalion as a sculptor in love with his own statue.

because those who say 'in love,' mean 'blind' to the faults of what they love. Was there never a Greek tyrant whose ears were filled with as much flattery as a poet pays to himself when he praises those feigned deities born of his pen? It is mainly the worst poets who should heed what Cicero said:

> *In hoc enim genere nescio quo pacto magis quam in aliis suum cuique pulcherrimum est. Adhuc neminem cognovi Poetam* [...] *qui sibi non optimus videretur*.
>
> [*Tuscul*. bk. 5][23]

But a good poet does not simply rest content with what he has put on paper. The verses do not satisfy him until they are good enough to please others, and the pain he suffers at polishing them to his liking makes him impatient with himself.

23 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.63: "For in this art, more than in others, it somehow happens that everyone finds his own work excellent. So far I have never known the poet ... who did not think himself the best."

CHAPTER 10

Of the Time It Takes People of Genius to Reach the Eminence of Which They Are Capable.

The time it takes geniuses to reach the eminence of which they are capable varies. In the first place, geniuses born for professions that demand a lot of experience and maturity of mind mature later than those who are born for professions in which one succeeds with a little wisdom and a lot of imagination. For example, a great minister, a great general, or a great magistrate only becomes what he is capable of being at a later age than the age at which painters and poets attain the degree of excellence their stars allow them to reach. The former cannot mature without knowledge and insight that can only be acquired by experience, and even personal experience. These cannot be provided by breadth of mind, subtlety of imagination, or even application. In short, these professions demand mature judgement and especially firmness without obstinacy. One is born with a disposition to acquire these qualities, but one is not born with these qualities fully formed. One cannot even acquire them at an early age.

Since the imagination develops its strength earlier than the judgement can develop its strength, painters, poets, musicians, and those whose talent mainly consists in creativity, do not take so long to mature. I think that, generally speaking, thirty is the age by which painters and poets have climbed to the highest height of Parnassus that their genius permits. They subsequently become more correct, they become more astute in their works. But they do not become more fruitful, more affecting, or more sublime.

Since some geniuses develop more slowly than others (this is my second point) and their progress can be slowed by all of the obstacles we have noted, we have not alleged that thirty is the critical age, before which and after which nothing can be expected. The age at which two great painters, or two great poets, can reach the height of their powers can vary by five or six years. One can be there by twenty-eight and the other at thirty-three. Racine was mature at twenty-eight. La Fontaine was much older when he wrote the first of his excellent works. The type of poetry to which an artist applies himself seems to delay the onset of maturity. Molière was forty when he wrote the first of his comedies worthy of being numbered among those on which his reputation rests. But it was not a sufficient condition of Molière being a great poet that he be able to write comedies. He also needed to have acquired knowledge of people and

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_065

the world. One does not have this knowledge at an early age but, without it, the best poet can only write mediocre comedies. The tragic poet must reach the degree of perfection that he is capable of attaining at an earlier age than the comic poet. Genius and a general knowledge of the human heart, such as elementary education provides, are sufficient to make an excellent tragedy. It is necessary, to produce a comedy of the same rank, to have genius and to have studied, but one must also have lived a long time in society. Indeed, to compose an excellent comedy, it is necessary to know that age, education, and profession make for differences in people with the same natural character. It is necessary to know how the sort of mind peculiar to certain people affects the sentiments common to everyone. In short, it is necessary to know humanity in depth, and to know the language of all of the passions, of all ages, and of all social classes. Ten years is not enough to learn so many things.

Naturally, great geniuses reach their point of perfection a little later than geniuses less elevated and extensive. Great geniuses have more to do than others. They are like trees that bear excellent fruit but which, in the spring, have scarcely any leaves when other trees are already completely covered in foliage. Quintilian, whose profession required him to study the characters of children, spoke with a feeling of marvel of what he called *slow and precocious minds*. If the body, he said, is not fleshy in infancy, it will not be well-formed in adulthood. Children, whose parts mature too early, become infirm and scrawny in adolescence. Thus, of all children, the least promising ones, Quintilian added, are the ones everyone finds to be more intelligent than the others, because their judgement is advanced. But this premature rationality only comes from their minds' lack of vigour. They do well, but only because they do not have any diseases and not because they have strong bodies.

> *Erit illud plenius interim corpus, quod mox adulta aetas astringat. hinc spes roboris. maciem namque et infirmitatem in posterum minari solet protinus omnibus membris expressus infans …. Illa mihi in pueris natura minimum spei dederit, in qua ingenium iudicio praesumitur ….macies illis pro sanitate et iudicii loco infirmitas est*
>
> [Quintil. bk. 2. ch. 4][1]

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.4.5–6, 7 and 9: "That will put flesh on them for a time, but growing up will in due course slim them down. This is where one sees hope of future strength. The baby whose limbs are all distinctly visible from the start threatens to be skinny and weak later on … The quality in a boy which, to my mind, gives least promise is the premature growth of judgement at the expense of creative talent … They [dry teachers] think leanness means health and weakness good judgement."

This passage, from which I have only selected some pieces, deserves to be read in its entirety.

However, teachers find this [precocious] character most auspicious. I refer to ordinary teachers, since if the teacher is a genius, he will discern genius in the student of eighteen. He will initially recognize him by the manner in which he will pursue his studies and from the objections that he will present. In short, he will recognize him because he will do everything that the teacher did when he was a student. In this way, Scipio Aemilianus recognized the genius of Marius.[2] Scipio named Marius in response to those who asked who would be capable of commanding the Republic's armies if Scipio died. However, Marius was quite a junior officer without any exploits to his name. He had not given evidence of any qualities that made him worthy, in the eyes of ordinary people, of being the successor to Scipio.

When young people arrive at the age when they must think for themselves, and draw on their own funds, the difference between the person of genius, and the one who does not have it, is apparent and becomes noticeable by everyone. The person of genius creates a lot, even if he does so badly. The other creates nothing. But, *Facile est remedium ubertati; Sterilia nullo labore vincuntur* [Quint. *Instit*. bk. 2. ch. 4].[3] The art that could not find water where there is none, could confine to their beds rivers that overflow. The more that the person with genius and the person without genius advance towards adulthood, the more the difference between them becomes apparent. What happens with regard to the painter and the poet is parallel to what happens in all situations in life. The art of a guardian and the lessons of a teacher transform a child into a young man. They give him more food for thought than one should naturally have at his age. When this child arrives at the age when he must think, speak, and act for himself, all of a sudden, he wastes this precocious achievement. His summer dashes all the hopes of his spring. The excessively painstaking education that he has received becomes harmful to him because he has adopted the dangerous habit of letting others think for him. His mind has contracted an internal idleness which causes him to await external impulses before choosing and acting: the

2 Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus, known as Scipio Aemilianus or Scipio Africanus the Younger (185–129 BC), Roman general and statesman. He was responsible for the defeat and destruction of Carthage. Gaius Marius (157–86 BC), Roman general and statesman. Du Bos refers to a passage in Plutarch (*Life of Marius*, 3). During the siege of the Carthaginian city of Numantia, Scipio named Marius as a possible successor during an after-dinner conversation about military command. Plutarch (ca. AD 46–120), Greek biographer and essayist, best known as the author of *Parallel Lives*.

3 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.4.6: "Exuberance is easily remedied; no effort can overcome barrenness."

mind contracts a habit of laziness as easily as the legs and feet do. A man who only goes out in a vehicle is soon without the use of his legs that the person who is in the habit of walking enjoys. Just as one must give a hand to the former, when he walks, one must assist the other to think, and even to will. The mind of a child raised without so much care rouses itself and becomes active. He learns to reason and decide for himself as he learns other things. He finally succeeds in reasoning well and standing up for himself by means of reasoning and reflecting on what has led him astray when events show him that he has been mistaken.

The more an artist gifted with genius takes time to mature, the more he needs experience to become moderate in his flights of fancy, restrained in his creativity, and wise in his productions, the further he normally goes. Noon in summer is further from sunrise than noon in winter. Cherries ripen during the first warm weather, but grapes only ripen with the assistance of the heat of summer and the warmth of autumn. Nature does not want, said Quintilian, anything important to be achieved in a short time. The more excellent the type to which a work belongs, the more it is necessary to overcome difficulties to complete it. These are the views of the author I have cited, who certainly knew what he was talking about, though he had never read Descartes.[4] *Nihil enim rerum ipsa natura voluit magnum effici cito praeposuitque pulcherrimo cuique operi difficultatem; quae nascendi quoque hanc fecerit legem, ut maiora animalia diutius visceribus parentis continerentur* [Quint. *Inst*. bk. 10. Ch. 2].[5] The more the fibres of the brain must have interconnections, and the more numerous these fibres are, the more time will be needed for the brain to acquire all of the powers of which it is capable.

Thus the great masters are students for longer than ordinary artists. They are, if you will, apprenticed for a long time because they are still learning at an age at which ordinary artists already know the little that they are capable of knowing. The title of an apprentice does not belittle anyone, since there are apprentices who are already better than their masters, even if the masters make fewer mistakes than they do. *Sed his non labentibus nulla, illis non nulla laus etiamsi labantur* [Plin. *Epist*].[6]

---

4 René Descartes (1596–1650), French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, widely regarded as a founder of modern philosophy. The point of this passage seems to be that it is possible to make progress in the sciences without having read Descartes.

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.3.4: "Nature herself has willed that no great thing can be brought about in a moment; she has set difficulties in the way of every noble work—she even made it a law of birth that bigger animals should stay longer within the mother's womb."

6 Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 9.26.2: "runners win praise in spite of a stumble, whereas there is

[Guido] Reni and Domenichino both made a picture for a small church dedicated to St. Andrew in the Garden of the Monastery of San Gregorio Magno al Celio.[7] Annibale Carracci, their teacher, was pressed to say which of these two students deserved the prize. Guido's picture represents St. Andrew kneeling before the Cross and that of Domenichino represents the flagellation of this apostle. [Domenichino repeated this subject at Saint-Andrea della Valle.][8] These were large-scale works and our two competitors had an open field to display evidence of their genius. They executed their works with all the more care since the frescos faced each other and must be perpetual rivals and, so to speak, eternalize the competition of the artists. Guido, said Carracci, has created as a master and Domenichino as an apprentice. But, he added, the apprentice is better than the master. In truth, one sees defects in the picture of Domenichino. Guido has no faults in his, but there are features in Domenichino's that are not in his rival's painting. We notice in Domenichino's painting a genius that reaches for beauties to which the sweet and peaceful genius of Reni does not aspire.

The more people are capable of improving themselves, the more stages there are for them climb in order to reach the pinnacle of their success. Horace must have been a grown man when he became known for poetry. Virgil was nearly thirty when he wrote his first eclogue. Racine was approximately this age, according to Boileau, when he wrote *Andromache*,[9] which was the first tragedy of this great poet. Corneille was more than thirty when he wrote *El Cid*. At this age, Molière had still not written any of the comedies on which his reputation rests. Boileau was thirty when he published his *Satires* in the form in which we have them. True, the dates put on his poems in a posthumous edition suggest other dates, but these dates are often disputed, even the piece of poetry itself at the head of which they have been placed. These arguments appear to me to carry no weight. Raphael was nearly thirty when he became known, on the basis of his works in the Vatican, for the nobility and sublimity of his genius. The Vatican contains the first works that are worthy of the great name that he enjoys at present.

no credit in walking without a fall." Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, known in English as Pliny the Younger (61–ca. 113), Roman jurist and letter writer.

7 Du Bos refers to a church in Rome, part of a Benedictine monastery. Domenichino contributed a fresco of the *Flagellation of St. Andrew* to the decoration of this church. Reni has two works in the church: *Saint Andrew Brought to the Temple* and *Saints Peter and Paul*.

8 This is a church in Rome. The apse half-dome features a *History of St. Andrew* by Domenichino.

9 *Andromaque* (1667), set in the aftermath of the Trojan War, Racine's play is concerned with widow of Hector.

CHAPTER 11

On Works Suitable to Men of Genius, and of Artists Who Counterfeit Others' Style.

Men of genius, who jealously guard their reputation, should only let their great works see the light of day, since they cannot conceal their apprenticeship from the eyes of the public. By this precaution they avoid providing an opportunity for mortifying comparisons. When the most inspired poets and painters present [to the public] either poems composed of a small number of verses, or paintings containing only a single, expressionless figure, posed in a common style, such productions are exposed to odious comparisons. Since one can make four or five successful verses without genius, or one can paint a decent Virgin with an infant on her lap without being a great painter, such limited works do not reveal the difference between a simple artist and a divine artist, as it can in more complex pieces, which are susceptible to a greater number of beauties. Only in the latter does this difference fully appear in all its breadth.

There are some paintings of the Virgin by Carlo Maratta,[1] which his friends claim that, without being accused of outrageous exaggeration, rival Raphael's in beauty. But what a difference between the great compositions of these two painters! Whoever thought them comparable! Although presumption is as familiar to painters as to poets, Carlo Maratta himself would never dare set his paintbrush alongside Raphael's. A little before the year 1700, they wanted to renovate the ceiling of the gallery of the palace known in Rome as the 'Little Farnese.'[2] This is the house built by Agostino Chigi, who lived under the pontificate of Leo X.[3] Paintings in this house commissioned from Raphael by Chigi made the name 'Chigi' as famous throughout Europe as Pope Alexander VII.[4]

1 Carlo Maratta (1625–1713), Italian painter working in baroque classicising style.

2 The Villa Farnesina is a suburban Italian villa located in central Italy. It was built for Agostino Chigi (1466–1520), an immensely rich Renaissance banker. He was a major patron of the arts, and commissioned works by many artists, including Raphael. This should not be confused with the 'Farnesina ai Baullari,' or 'Little Farnese,' a 16th century Roman palace built for Thomas le Roy (d. 1524), the prelate from Breton who moved to Rome in the service of King Charles VIII.

3 Born Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici (1475–1521), pope 1513–1521, and a notable patron of the arts. During his reign, Raphael painted the Vatican and Leo patronized other painters and musicians.

4 Fabio Chigi (1599–1667), became Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_066

As the leading painter in Rome, Carlo Maratta was chosen to decorate the ceiling of which I speak, and on which Raphael had depicted the story of Psyche.[5] This chivalrous man agreed only to retouch it with pastel, saying, "Should there happen to come along a person more worthy than I am to join his paintbrush with Raphael's, perhaps he will erase my work and substitute his own."

Vander Meulen[6] could paint a horse as well as Le Brun,[7] and Baptiste[8] could make a basket of flowers better than Poussin.[9] Speaking of poetry, Boileau wrote epigrams greatly inferior to two or three poets who would not dare compare themselves to him. We cannot judge the superiority of one horse over another when they run just a short distance. It is only when the course is much longer that the difference can be seen. It would be superfluous to explain here what I mean by the expression 'little work,' because a three-foot painting can sometimes be a great work, and a poem of three hundred lines can be a great poem.

I will add a thought about works that do not demand much invention: counterfeiters in painting counterfeit them much more easily than they can counterfeit works in which the artist's whole imagination had room to unfold. Makers of pastiches, paintings painted in the style of a great artist and displayed under his name, even though he never saw them, cannot, I claim, counterfeit the arrangement, colour, or expression of great masters. One imitates another's hand, but not, so to speak, his mind, and one cannot learn to think like another, even though one can learn to speak like him.

The mediocre painter who wants to counterfeit a great composition by Domenichino or Rubens cannot convince us more than someone who desires to make a pastiche under the name of Giorgione or Titian. To succeed in having one's work taken for that of the painter, one needs to have genius nearly equal to

---

5 On the ground floor of the Villa Farnesina there is a cycle of frescoes representing the mythological story of Psyche, from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. These were completed by Raphael and his apprentices in 1517–1518. Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis, known in English as Apuleius (ca. 124–ca. 170 BC), Numidian writer and philosopher who wrote in Latin, and best known today for his novel, *The Golden Ass*.

6 Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632–1690), Flemish baroque painter. He specialized in military painting.

7 Le Brun's patron was none other than King Louis XIV, and his influence was felt intensively throughout the artistic world.

8 Du Bos refers, perhaps, to Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay (1653–1715), a French painter who specialized in flowers or Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1636–1699), Franco-Flemish painter who also specialized in flower pieces.

9 Poussin depicted ancient myths and history in his luxurious paintings, drawn from the books of the ancient poets.

that of the painter who one wants to copy. One cannot therefore counterfeit the genius of great men. But sometimes one succeeds in counterfeiting their hand, that is to say, their style of applying colour and drawing features, the angle of the head that is repeated, and perhaps even what is wrong in their technique. It is easier to imitate men's faults than their perfections. For example, we blame Reni[10] for making heads that are too flat. They lack roundness because their parts run together, and they are not adequately raised above one another. To paint like Reni, one needs to forget and to not take pains to practice what one has learned from art lessons for giving roundness to heads.

The Neapolitan Giordano,[11] whose compatriots called *'Il sa presto*,' or 'the quick dispatcher,' was, after Teniers, one of the greatest pastiche makers who ever laid traps for investigators. Proud to have successfully counterfeited some of Reni's heads, he set out to make great compositions in that likeable artist's style, and in the style of Carracci's other students. All of his paintings representing different events in the history of Persia are in Genoa, in the Palazzo of the Marquis Grillo,[12] who paid the forger better than the great masters he aped[13] had been paid in their time. We are surprised by seeing these paintings; but it is because a painter who did not lack talent used his time so badly, and the noble Genovese wasted his money.

The same is true in poetry. A man without genius, but who has read lots of poems, could, in carefully arranging what he recalls, compose an epigram that will resemble Martial's well enough that one might mistake it for Martial's. But a poet, who after spending time composing a thirteenth book of the *Aeneid*, would have to be really bold to attribute it to Virgil, since no one would believe him. Muret passed off six verses he composed himself for six verses by Trabea, a Latin comic poet,[14] who lived six centuries after Rome's foundation.[15]

---

10 Reni abandoned many of the increasingly popular techniques in perspective, giving a flatter appearance to his figures.

11 Luca Giordano (1632–1705), Italian baroque painter and printmaker. He painted many portraits. Best known for the speed of production, Giordano was nicknamed *'Luca sa presto*' ('Luca paints quickly'), and he was also recognized for his talent at imitating the styles of others.

12 Du Bos refers to a noble family, then resident in Genoa. At the time Du Bos wrote, the Marchese was Bernardo Giacinto del Grillo (fl. late-17th and early-18th centuries).

13 'Making something the monkey,' or 'aping,' was already a 17th century figurative expression meaning someone who counterfeits and imitates the movements, actions, style, etc. of someone else. See *Le Dictionnarie de l'Académie Française* (1694), vol. 2, entry 'Singe.'

14 Quintus Trabea (fl. late-3rd to early-2nd century BC), Latin comic poet. His works survive only in the texts quoted by Cicero.

15 Du Bos refers to a famous fraud performed by Marc Antoine Muret who used the Latinized name Muretus (1526–1585), French prose writer who followed Cicero's style. He was a stu-

Here, si querellis, ejulatu, fletibus
Medicina fieret miseriis mortalium;
Auro parandae lacrimae contra forent.
Nunc haec ad minuenda mala non magis valent,
Quam nenia Praeficae ad excitandos mortuos.
Res turbidae consilium, non fletum expetunt.
[Page. 212. *Edit. Year*. 1573][16]

These verses astonished Joseph Scaliger to the point that he mentioned them in his commentary on Varro as being a fragment by Trabea, found in an ancient manuscript.[17] Had Muret tried to forge an entire comedy by Terence, Muret would not have deceived Scaliger. But men who covet their reputations should not give credence to the forgers to come, or to impute to their memory works that they have not made. It is enough to be accountable to posterity for their own mistakes.

dent of Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), student of the ancient world and a leading French Protestant. Muretus led a colourful life, including being arrested for homosexuality and being banished. According to Pierre Bayle's *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*, vol. 5, 394–396: "Scaliger at the age of eighteen valued himself on discerning the different manners of writing of all ages. Muretus to intrap him, made some verses which he shewed him, pretending that he had received them from Germany, and that they were transcribed from an old manuscript. Scaliger after having attentively read them, assured him without hesitation that Trabea an ancient comic poet was the author of them; and continuing in the same opinion that his conjecture was infallible, he afterwards cited these verses as written by this ancient poet in his commentary on Varro, Muretus laughed at it heartily, without the least reserve. … Scaliger cited these verses in his commentary on *Varro de Re Rustica*, p. 211 of Henry Stephen's edition."

16 Marc Antoine Muret, *Orationes, Epistolae, et Poemata, cum praefatione et insignibus augmentis M. Iacobi Thomasii*, "Poematum Variorum" 1.61: "Afficta Trabeae," "Master, if through moans, cries, and weeping were a cure for all those ills which men endure, then tears would be bought with gold. These are no more able to lessen evils than the wailer's dirges can rouse the dead. Distress demands counsel, not tears."

17 Joseph Scaliger, *Varronis opera quae supersunt*, 212: "*Qui versus hactenus latuerunt, eosque nunc primum in vulgus publicatus. Quorum priores Trabeae, mihi ad verbum est Philemone mutuati videntur: qui eandem sententiam ad verbum extulit.*" "Up until now, these verses were hidden. Now I publish them, unedited, for the first time. The first of these are by Trabea. They seem to have been based on the lines of Philemon." Philemon (ca. 362–ca. 262 BC), Athenian poet and playwright.

CHAPTER 12

Of Illustrious Eras and of the Role That Human Causes Play in the Progress of the Arts.

Not all eras are equally productive of great artists. The least perceptive people have often noted that in some eras the arts languish while in others the arts and sciences provide flowers and fruit in abundance. There is no comparison between the poetical works of the Augustan era and the works of the era of Gallienus.[1] Was painting even the same art, so to speak, in the two centuries that preceded the era of Leo X[2] and in the era of this pope? The superiority of certain eras to others is too well known for us to pause to prove it. At issue here is the indication, if possible, of the causes that give so much superiority to one era over others.

Before addressing this subject, I must ask my reader for permission to use here the word 'era' [*siècle*] in a sense slightly different from its lexical meaning. The word 'era,' in its precise sense, means a span of one hundred years but sometimes I will use it to mean a span of sixty or seventy years. I believed that I could use the word 'era' in this sense, with so much freedom, since the duration of an era is essentially arbitrary. It is convenient in the calculations and labeling of chronology to assign one hundred years to each century. No natural event occurs in a period of one hundred years comparable to the earth's orbit around the sun in one year, which we call a year. The word 'age' means a period too short to be useful here and, besides, everyone is in the habit of using the word 'era' when they speak of those fortunate times when the arts and sciences flourish extraordinarily. We are in the habit of talking and understanding in this context of the era of Augustus, the era of Alexander,[3] and the era of Louis the Great.[4]

1 The age of Augustus (27 BC–AD 14) saw the flourishing of such great poets as Virgil and Horace. The era of Gallienus (ruled 253–260 with his father and by himself 260–268) did not produce any memorable poets.

2 During de' Medici's reign, Raphael painted two rooms of the Vatican and Leo patronized other painters and musicians.

3 The reign of Philip II of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great, began in 359 BC. The period to which Du Bos refers saw the production of some of the greatest statues of antiquity, including the *Laocoön* and the *Venus de Milo*. The great painter Apelles was part of Alexander's entourage.

4 Du Bos refers to Louis XIV of France. Charles Perrault used the word '*siècle*' in Du Bos's sense in *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* [The Era of Louis the Great] (1687).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_067

For a start, human causes account for a large part of the apparent differences between eras. Here, by *human causes* I mean those causes that operate in favour of the arts without actually giving more intelligence to artists. In short, these causes do not effect a physical change in nature. They are only an occasion for artists to perfect their genius because these causes make work easier and because they encourage artists, by offering rewards and inspiring them to emulate others, to apply themselves and study. The human causes of the perfection of the arts are the fortunate state of the country of painters and poets where they pursue their careers; the appreciation of their sovereign and fellow citizens of the fine arts; and finally, the excellent teachers who live in their time, whose instruction shortens their studies and ensures that they are fruitful. Who can doubt that Raphael would have matured four years sooner if he had been the student of another Raphael? No one would say that a French painter, who began to develop at the outset of the thirty-five years of war that devastated France until the Peace of Vervins [In 1598],[5] had the same opportunity to develop as one who received the same encouragement that the first artist received, but who began to develop in 1660.

The compatriots of great artists cannot give to the fine arts the attention that makes them successful if they do not live in a time in which people are allowed to give more attention to their pleasures than to their needs. Widespread attention to pleasure presupposes a series of years free from the disturbances and fears associated with wars. Or, at least, those wars that cost individual people their security because they threaten the basis of society, of which they are all members. The Romans did not acquire a taste for the fine arts while they fought in their own country wars that could have been fatal to their republic since the enemy could, if he won a battle, be camped on the banks of the Tiber. The Romans began to love verse and painting only after they transferred the theatre of war to Greece, Africa, Asia, and Spain and only the glory of the Republic, and the extent of its dominion, rather than the fate of the Republic, was determined by the battles its generals fought. The Roman people, as Horace said,

> *Et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit,*
> *Quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile ferrent.*[6]

5 This treaty between Henry IV of France and Philip II of Spain brought an end to the war between their countries and, in conjunction with the Edict of Nantes, which proclaimed religious toleration in France, ended the Wars of Religion in France.

6 Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.162–163: "and in the peaceful days after the Punic wars he began to ask what service Sophocles could render, and Thespis and Aeschylus."

The rewards of the sovereign come next after the attention of artists' contemporaries. If he distributes his favours fairly, they are a great encouragement to artists, but they cease to be if they are badly distributed. The artist would prefer that the sovereign not distribute favours than that he distribute them without discernment. An able person can console himself if contempt is heaped on his art. A poet can even pardon those who do not enjoy his verse. But he is exasperated to the point of despair when he sees works crowned with glory that are not as valuable as his. He despairs at an injustice that personally humiliates him and he renounces poetry to the extent that he can.

People do not flatter themselves internally as much as is commonly believed. They have some glimmer of their true value and they appreciate themselves, in the depths of their hearts, to the degree to which they are valued in the world. People who are neither sovereigns, nor ministers, nor close relations of either, have such frequent occasion to know their true worth, that they suspect it in the end, unless they are completely stupid. One cannot applaud by oneself for very long and Cotin[7] could not ignore the fact that the public booed him. Haughtiness about favourable opinion that mediocre poets display is thus often affected. They cannot believe all the good that they say about their works. Can we doubt that poets often speak in bad faith about the value of their verses? Is it not contrary to their actual conviction that they claim that their best works are the ones that the public admires least? But they want to support the weak poem that needs backing by displaying an affected preference for it while they abandon to their fate the works that can fly on their own wings. Corneille often said that *Attila*[8] was his best piece and Racine gave people to understand that he loved *Berenice*[9] most of all his secular tragedies.

Not only should great masters be rewarded, but they should be distinctively rewarded. Without distinction, the gifts cease to be rewards and become an ordinary salary given to good and bad artists alike. No one is honoured more than another. The Roman soldier would no longer have valued the oaken crown,[10] for which he exposed himself to the greatest dangers, if this honour had been given four times in a row to people who did not deserve it.

---

7 Charles Cotin (1604–1681), French clergyman, philosopher, and poet. He was a member of the Académie française and, contrary to what Du Bos suggests, quite popular. However, both Boileau and Molière thought poorly of him.

8 *Attila* (1667) enjoyed only a moderate success in the 17th century and is not frequently produced today.

9 French title: *Bérénice* (1670) was produced only rarely between the 17th and 20th centuries, but it is currently quite popular.

10 The *Corona Civica* was awarded to Roman soldiers who displayed unusual valour in battle and saved the life a comrade. The crown was made from ordinary oak leaves.

Human causes have favoured the arts in eras in which poetry and painting have flourished. The annals of humankind mention four eras whose works are admired by all subsequent eras. These fortunate eras, in which the arts have attained a perfection which they have not reached in other eras, are the ones that began ten years before the reign of Philip, father of Alexander the Great, the one of Julius Caesar and Augustus, the one of Julius II and Leo X, and, finally, the one of our King Louis XIV.

During the time of Philip, Greece was no longer afraid of barbarian invasion. The internecine wars of the Greeks did not destroy society. In particular, they did not drive the Greeks from their homes and make them slaves to a foreign enemy, unlike the wars that brutal conquerors, issuing from the snows of the north, waged from time to time against the Roman Empire. Wars in Greece resembled those which are often fought on the frontiers of the Spanish Netherlands, that is, wars in which people risk being conquered, but not being enslaved or losing their property. People were not exposed to the misfortunes that still happen in wars between Turks and Christians. The internecine wars of the Greeks were properly called regulated wars or humane wars, often waged with chivalry. A law of nations at that time forbade the tearing down of a monument that the enemy had put up to perpetuate their glory and our shame. All of the laws of nations, that distinguish the battle of people from the battles of ferocious beasts, were then so consistently obeyed that the people of Rhodes preferred to construct a building to enclose and hide the monument erected by Artemisia, after she had captured their city, rather than to, if it is permitted to speak so, give it the finger.[11] Greece was still full of safe havens respected by both sides. A perfect neutrality always reigned in these sanctuaries and the bitterest enemy would not attack the weakest opponent there. One can form an idea of how little ruthlessness was displayed in battles between the Greeks by the surprise that they felt, according to Livy, when they experienced the murderous armies of the Romans and their ruthlessness in the mêlée. This surprise was equal to that the Italians felt when they experienced the manner in which the French make war, during the campaign of our King Charles VIII against the Kingdom of Naples.[12]

11 Artemisia II of Caria (d. 350 BC), the sister, wife and successor of Mausolus, she reigned in her own right for two years after the death of Mausolus. She conquered Rhodes and erected a trophy. As Du Bos reports, after the Rhodians regained their freedom they erected a building over the monument.

12 In 1494, a French army under the command of Charles VIII marched the length of Italy, easily defeating Florence before capturing Naples.

During Greece's fortunate period, people of all classes were naturally very comfortable. Society was then divided into masters and slaves. This division was better able to serve the needs of society than a poorly educated peasantry living hand to mouth, lacking things that they needed to work efficiently when they were reduced to labour. Wasps and hornets were then fewer in number, relative to the bees, than they are today. The Greeks, for example, did not raise a portion of their citizens to be unfit for anything except waging war. This type of education has long been one of the biggest scourges of Europe. Thus, the common people of the nation were mainly concerned with pleasure, as are those of our citizens who are born to 100,000 livres of revenue. The fortunate Greek climate made them very responsive to the pleasures of the mind. Of these, poetry and painting have the most beguiling charm. Thus, most Greeks became connoisseurs and, at least, acquired a comparative taste. Thus, in Greece a craftsman became a famous artist as soon as he deserved to be, and nothing was more ennobling than the title of a man celebrated in the arts and sciences. This type of worth transformed a common person into a person of standing and the equal of those who were the greatest and most important of the state.

The Greeks were so well disposed towards all the talents that add charm to society that their kings did not disdain to choose their ministers from among actors [Livy, *Histor*. bk. 24; Quint. *Dialog. Orator*.].[13] *In scaenam vero prodire ac populo esse spectaculo, nemini in eisdem gentibus fuit turpitudini, quae omnia apud nos partim infamia, partim humilia, partim ab honestate remota ponuntur*, said Cornelius Nepos in speaking of the Greeks [*In Preface*].[14]

Opportunities to receive applause and to be singled out before a large audience were very common in Greece. In our day, representatives of kings and

13 Livy, *History of Rome* 24: "*Huic et genus et fortuna honesta erant, nec ars, quia nihil tale apud Graecos pudori est, ea deformabat*." "This man's family and station were respectable and not tarnished by his artistic profession, since among the Greeks nothing of the sort brings discredit." Livy refers to Aristo, a tragic actor who revealed a treacherous plot to seize control of Syracuse by Adranodoros and Themistos.

Tacitus, *A Dialogue on Oratory* 10.5: "*Ut si in Graecia natus esses, ubi ludicras quoque artes exercere honestum est*." [If you had been a Greek, a native of a country where it is quite respectable to practise the arts that serve only for pastime.] Du Bos refers to a former attribution of the *Dialogue* to Quintilian, now recognized as a work of Tacitus. Publius Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 56–ca. 120), Roman senator and historian.

14 Cornelius Nepos (ca. 110–ca. 25 BC), Roman historian. His only surviving work is *Excellentium Imperatorum Vitae* [Lives of the Excellent Generals], a series of biographies of Roman generals. Du Bos quotes from the *Preface*, 5: "even to appear on the stage and exhibit oneself to the people was never regarded as shameful by those nations. With us, however, all those acts are classed either as disgraceful, or as low and unworthy of respectable conduct."

peoples that make up the community of nations meet from time to time to end wars and regulate the destiny of nations. Similarly, the most illustrious Greeks met from time to time in assemblies to pass judgement on who was the greatest painter, the most moving poet, and the best athlete. This was the real motive that attracted everyone to the games that were held in various towns. The public porticos where poets went to read their verses and where painters displayed their pictures were the places where what we call high society gathered. Indeed, the works of great masters were not regarded, in the period of which I speak, as ordinary furniture intended to decorate the rooms of an individual person. They were regarded as delights of a state and treasures of the public, enjoyment of which was owed to all citizens. *Non enim parietes excolebant dominis tantum nec domos uno in loco mansuras, quae existimat incendiis rapi non possent* [....] *omnium eorum ars urbibus excubabat, pictorque res communis terrarum erat* [Plin. *Hist*. bk. 35].[15] The eagerness that painters and poets had to perfect their abilities was as great as the eagerness that we see in our contemporaries to amass wealth and acquire high offices in a nation. So, as Horace said, the muses gave the Greeks inspiration and skill with language, to repay them for having paid court to the muses and for having been disinterested above all in praising them.

> *Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo*
> *Musa loqui, praeter laudem nullius auaris*.
> [Horace. *Art*.][16]

If we consider the situation in Rome when Virgil, Pollio,[17] Varius,[18] Horace, Tibullus,[19] and their contemporaries so honoured poetry, we will see that in their time, this city was the flourishing capital of the greatest and most for-

15 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.118: "for they did not decorate walls, merely for owners of property, or houses, which would remain in one place and which could not be rescued from a fire ... With all these artists their art was on the alert for the benefit of cities, and a painter was the common property of the world." The general sense of the passage quoted is found in the preceding lines of Du Bos.

16 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 323–324: "To the Greeks the Muse gave native wit, to the Greeks she gave speech in well-rounded phrases; they craved naught but glory."

17 Gaius Asinius Pollio (75 BC–AD 4), Roman politician (elected Consul in 40 BC), soldier, and poet. Pollio was a patron of Virgil, a friend of Horace, and a poet in his own right.

18 Lucius Varius Rufus (ca. 74–14 BC), Roman poet, friend of Virgil and Horace. Only fragments of his writings survive, but he is known to have written both epic and tragedy and his work was well regarded in the ancient world.

19 Albius Tibullus (ca. 55–19 BC), known in English as Tibullus, Latin poet and elegist.

tunate Empire that ever was. A tranquil Rome tasted, after several years of troubles and civil wars, the sweetness of repose unknown for a long time. This repose occurred during the government of a monarch who truly loved merit, because he had so much himself. Besides, Augustus was bound to make good use of his newborn authority to firmly establish tranquility. Consequently, he only appointed as his ministers friends of justice who would use their power advisedly. Consequently, riches, honours, and distinctions were ranked below merit. Since a monarchy was, in Rome, a new and odious thing, Augustus at least wanted that he could be blamed for nothing except having a court.

Let us continue to the era of Leo X during which arts and letters, which had been buried for ten centuries, issued from the tomb. We see that, under his pontificate, Italy enjoyed the greatest wealth it had had since the reign of the Caesars. Petty tyrants, ensconced with their minions in endless fortresses, whose arguments and quarrels were equally plagues on society, were exterminated by the wisdom and courage of Alexander VI. Sedition was banished from cities that, generally speaking, had finally established by the end of the previous century stable and law-abiding governments. The foreign wars that began in Italy with the invasion of Naples by Charles VIII did not torment society as much as the perpetual fear of being captured, when one went into the countryside, by the henchmen of the scoundrel who had settled there and, as one then said, was 'fortified in a castle,' or by the worry that one's house would be burned down during an insurrection by the populace. The wars fought in that period were like hailstorms that came in gusts. Like these storms, the wars only ravaged a strip of country. The art of pillaging whole provinces to support armies on the border had not yet been invented. This pernicious art perpetuates the quarrels of sovereigns and makes the disasters of wars last a long time after treaties, so peace can only begin several years after a war ends.

The papal throne was successively occupied by two popes who wanted to leave behind illustrious monuments to their pontificates. They were consequently obliged to try to gain the allegiance of all the artists and men of letters who could immortalize the popes in immortalizing themselves. Francis I,[20] Charles V, and Henry VIII[21] chose to foster literature and science and became rivals for reputations [as patrons of the arts]. Arts and letters made remarkable

20 Francis I (1494–1547), King of France, reigned from 1515 until his death. He actively patronized the arts. Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, and other major artists received his patronage.

21 Henry VIII (1491–1547), King of England, reigned from 1509 until his death. He was the first English king with a modern education, and he cultivated the arts, including music.

progress. Painting became perfect in a few years. *Cum expeteretur a regibus populisque* [*et alios*] *nobilitante quos esset dignata posteris tradere* [Plin. bk. 35].[22]

The reign of the late king [Louis XIV] was a time of prosperity for the arts and letters. From the time that this prince began to reign for himself[23] he made the most favourable arrangements for people of genius that had ever been made by any sovereign. The minister that he employed to take care of the details was a capable man. The patronage of Colbert[24] was never purchased by an assiduous servility in paying him court or by a real or feigned devotion to his wishes. His only wish was to serve his prince by means of the most capable people. Sole author of his decisions and dispenser of his favours, he would look for those who had this capacity when they would not dare to ask [for his patronage]. Through the magnificence of this prince, and the performance of the minister, merit became a national treasure.

22 Pliny, *Natural History* 35.2: "at the time when it was in high demand with kings and nations and when it ennobled others whom it deigned to transmit to posterity."

23 Louis was only four when he ascended to the throne in 1643. He did not assume control of the government until 1661.

24 Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), French statesman; French minister of finance from 1665 until his death. He founded a number of important institutions for the support of the arts, including Académie Royale de Musique (1669), Académie Royale d'Architecture (1671) and the Académie de France à Rome (1666).

CHAPTER 13

That It Is Probable That Physical Causes Play a Role in the Surprising Progress of the Arts and Letters.

In the end, there is no doubt that human causes contribute to the surprising progress that poetry and painting have made in certain eras. But have not physical causes also had an influence on this progress? Do they not contribute to the vast differences that we notice between the state of the arts and letters in two adjacent eras? Do not the physical causes put the human causes into effect? Do the generosity of sovereigns and the appreciation of contemporaries develop illustrious painters and poets? Is it not rather that great artists elicit this generosity and, by the marvels to which they give birth, attract to their arts an attention that no one pays when the arts were still crude? Tacitus remarks that periods that produce illustrious people also produce people capable of rendering them justice. *Virtutes iisdem temporibus optimae aestimantur, quibus facillimae gignuntur* [*Vit. Agric.*].[1] Could we not believe that there are times when people are born in some country with greater capacity than at normal times in the same country? One might think, for example, that Augustus, even if he were served by two Maecenases[2] and reigned in the time of Constantine,[3] could not have converted by his generosity the writers of the 4th century into Livys and Ciceros. Can we believe that, if Julius II and Leo X had reigned in Sweden, their generosity would have cultivated in those hyperboreal regions[4] Raphaels, Bembos,[5] and Machiavellis?[6] Are all countries able

1 Tacitus, *On the life of Julius Agricola* 1.3–4: "virtues are best appreciated in those ages which most readily give them birth." This passage from Tacitus is paraphrased in the preceding sentence by Du Bos.

2 Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (68–8 BC), Roman statesman, poet, and patron of the arts. A friend of Augustus, Maecenas was de facto minister for the arts in the imperial government. He was a patron of Horace and Virgil.

3 Constantine the Great (272–337), Roman Emperor 306–337. He was responsible for many administrative reforms and was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity.

4 This is a synonym for 'people of the north.' It refers to places beyond (*hyper*) the tree line (*boreal*).

5 Bonifacio Bembo (fl. 1444–1477), important Italian painter of the early Renaissance. He was active at the court of Milan.

6 Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Florentine politician, diplomat, philosopher, and playwright, best known today as author of *The Prince*.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_068

to produce great poets and great painters? Are there not some barren periods in the countries capable of producing them?

In meditating on this subject, it seems that several ideas often come to mind that I recognise as mere glimmers rather than as bright ideas. The first people, of whom sacred and profane history speak, and who lived several centuries, certainly surpassed their descendants in serenity of mind and good appearance. But I still do not know, after all my reflection, if people born in certain periods surpass both their ancestors and descendants in intellectual breadth and power. But there is enough probability in my ideas for me to discuss them with the reader.

People often attribute to human causes effects that are attributable to physical causes. Sometimes we ascribe to mishaps sorrows whose source lies purely in an imbalance of our humours, or in a disposition of the air that afflicts our machine. If the air had been more serene, perhaps we would have viewed with indifference something that brings us to despair. I am going to present here my reflections all the more readily in that, when presenting hypotheses and conjectures, one is happily refuted when one learns from criticisms things more well-grounded than those one had imagined. As Cicero said, *Nos qui sequimur probabilia nec ultra quam id quod veri simile occurrit, progredi possumus, et refellere sine pertinacia et refelli sine iracundia parati sumus* [*Tuscul. Que.*].[7]

My first reflection is that there are countries and times in which arts and letters do not flourish, though the human causes that promote their advancement are present. The Achilleses who appear in these times do not find a Homer worthy of singing their great deeds. "All that they do is furnish future poets with subjects suitable to excite and sustain them."[8]

---

7 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.2.5: "we, however, whose guide is probability and who are unable to advance further than the point at which the likelihood of truth has presented itself, are prepared both to refute without obstinacy and be refuted without anger."

8 This sentence appears in Du Bos' text in quotation marks, but without a citation. It is a paraphrase from Jean Racine: "*Mais quand il n'y aurait nulle difficulté en cela, je ne vois pas sur quoi on fonde que ce sont les grands événements qui font les poëtes et les orateurs. Tout ce qu'ils font, c'est de leur fournir des sujects propres à les exciter et à les soutenir.*" [But when there would be no difficulty in saying so, I do not see the basis for saying that it is the great events that make poets and orators. All that they do is furnish their works with subjects suitable for exciting and sustaining them.] Racine is critically responding to the dedicatory letter to the King at the start of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) written by Charles Perrault, specifically, to Perrault's claim that "*Les graces que vous versez sans cesse sur les gens de lettres bien fair fleurir les arts et sciences; mais ce sont les grands événements qui font les poëtes et les ora-*

The second reflection is that the arts and letters do not attain perfection by progress that is slow and in proportion to the length of time they have been pursued by a culture. Rather, they progress suddenly. They attain perfection when human causes do nothing to advance them except what they have fruitlessly been doing for a long time. Arts and letters can even decline when human causes are redoubled in an effort to maintain them at a level to which they had risen by themselves.

Indeed, great painters were often contemporaries of great poets and both always lived at the same time as the greatest of their compatriots. It seems that, in their time and country, some spirit of perfection spread through humanity. The professions that have flourished at the same time as poetry and painting have declined with them.

First Reflection

It would be pointless to argue vigorously that there are some countries in which one has never seen great painters or great poets. For example, everyone knows that the far north has only produced savage poets, crude versifiers, and cold colourists. Painting and poetry do not approach the North Pole any nearer than the latitude of Holland. Even in this province one scarcely finds a boring painter. Dutch poets have displayed more vigour and a fierier spirit than their fellow painters. It seems that poetry does not fear the cold as much as painting.

It has always been observed that glory of the mind was so restricted to certain countries that even bordering countries did not share it with them. Paterculus [Patercul. bk. *Hist*. 1][9] said that we should not be more surprised that so many Athenians were famous for their eloquence than we are surprised that no one at Thebes, Sparta, or Argo was famous as a great orator. Having been accustomed by experience, we are not surprised by this unequal distribution of inspiration in countries so close together. "Different ideas," said a modern author, "are like plants or flowers that do not grow equally well in all types of

teurs." [The graces of the men of letters that you constantly write about may well make the arts and sciences flourish; but it is the great events that make poets and orators.] Their dispute was well-known and played a major role in the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. See Philip Lewis, "Writing to the King: Perrault's Dedicatory Epistle for the Dictionnaire de l'Académie," *MLN* 107 (1992), 673–697.

9 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 1. Marcus Velleius Paterculus, known as Velleius (ca. 19 BC–AD 31), Roman soldier and historian.

climates. Perhaps our French soil is not more suitable to Egyptian thought than it is to their palm trees. Without going quite so far, perhaps the orange trees that do not grow so well here as in Italy indicate that they have a way of thinking in Italy that is not exactly similar to the French. Certainly, the connections and reciprocal dependence between all parts of the material world, the differences in climate that are apparent from their plans, must extend as far as the brain, and have an effect on it" [de Fontenelle, *Digress. on the Ancients*].[10] It would have been nice if this author had taken the trouble to develop this point. He would have clarified better than I can the truths that I am trying to set forth. He possesses to the highest degree the most precious talent that a man of letters possesses, namely the gift of making the most abstract knowledge intelligible to everyone. He could make everyone grasp, with a little effort, the most complicated truths of science. This is even true of those who had studied these sciences only in his works.

It is not necessary to state the reason why the arts have not flourished above a latitude of 52° N or closer than 25° to the equator. They have not been transplanted into torrid or frigid zones. The arts give birth to themselves in suitable climates. Before the arts could be transplanted, they had to be born. They needed a cradle and inventors. Who transplanted the arts into Egypt? No one. The Egyptians, favoured by the climate of their country, gave them birth. The arts would give birth to themselves in countries where they are suitable, if they were not transported there. They would appear a bit later but would none the less appear. The arts have not flourished in the regions where some people live. These people live in a climate that is completely unsuited to the arts. But for the climate, the arts would have given birth to themselves there, or at least they would have been taken there by means of commerce.

The Greeks, for example, did not visit Egypt more frequently than the Poles, and other northern peoples, or the English visit Italy. However, the Greeks soon transplanted from Egypt the art of painting without its crude sovereigns and republics making a big deal about the acquisition of this art. Greece was like a fallow field adjacent to a forest. It soon becomes a grove if the earth is suitable for trees.

For two centuries, the English have loved painting as much as any other nation, except Italy. Foreign painters have established themselves in England, where they have earned three times as much as they would have elsewhere. It

10 The *Digression on the Ancients and Moderns* was first printed in *Poésies pastorales de M.D.F.* (Paris: 1688), 228–229. Bernard le Bouvier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), author and member of the Académie française.

is well known what Henry VIII made of painting and the magnificence with which he paid Holbein.[11] Queen Elizabeth[12] was generous to every variety of *vertù* during a reign of almost fifty years. Charles I,[13] who lived the high life during the first fifteen years of his reign, had a love for painting that became an intense passion. His ardour raised the price of paintings to where it is today. Since he was buying paintings in bulk at the same time that Philip IV,[14] King of Spain, was buying with prodigality, the competition of these two sovereigns tripled the cost of works by great masters in Europe. The treasures of art became real commercial treasures [Dryden. *Catal. of Painters*].[15] Up until now, however, no Englishman has deserved a place among painters of the first, or even among those of the second, class. The English climate is warm enough to produce great men in all of the sciences and professions. It has even provided good musicians and excellent poets, but it has not produced painters that hold among illustrious painters the same rank that English philosophers, scholars, poets, and other illustrious Englishmen hold among those of other nations which are distinguished in these professions. English painters are reduced to three portraitists [Cooper. d'Opson. Riley].[16]

The painters who flourished in England under Henry VIII and Charles I were foreigners who carried to this island an art that the natives could not fasten

11 Hans Holbein the Younger (ca. 1497–1543), German painter and print maker. On his second trip to England, which began in 1532, he enjoyed the patronage of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife. Beginning in 1535 he became painter to the King.

12 Elizabeth I (1533–1603), Queen of England; daughter of Henry VIII, reigned 1558 until her death.

13 Charles I (1600–1649), King of England, Ireland, and Scotland, reigned 1625–1649, until his execution.

14 Philip IV (Felipe IV) (1605–1665), King of Spain and Portugal from 1621 until his death. He was particularly noted for his patronage of the arts. Diego Velázquez received his patronage.

15 Dryden, *Catalogue of Painters*. John Dryden (1631–1700), important English poet, playwright, and critic. In 1668 he was appointed England's first Poet Laureate. Du Bos seems to be referring to the preface to Dryden's English translation of *De arte graphica* [On the writing arts], which was titled, "A parallel betwixt painting and poetry." *De arte graphica* is a Latin poem about the practice of painting written by du Fresnoy. See Volume Two, Chapter Nine above.

16 William Dobson (1611–1646), English portraitist. John Aubrey described him as "the most excellent painter that England has yet bred." John Riley (or Ryley) (1646–1691), English portraitist. Charles I and James II sat for him and he was court painter to William and Mary. The Cooper mentioned by Du Bos may be Alexander Cooper (1609–1660), an English painter of miniature portraits active at the Swedish and Danish courts or his elder brother Samuel (ca. 1608–1672), also a painter of miniatures.

upon. Holbein[17] and Lely[18] were Germans. Van Dyck[19] was Flemish. Even in our time, those who have passed in England for the premiere painters of the country were not English. Verrio[20] was Neapolitan and Kneller[21] was German. The coins that were minted in England during Cromwell's[22] time and the medallions that were struck during the reigns of Charles II and James II[23] were rather good works, but they were made by a foreigner: Roettiers[24] of Antwerp, the compatriot of Gibbons,[25] who for a long time has been the leading sculptor in London.

Those who inquire into this matter find that English works usually display poor taste when it comes to design. If these works are admirable it is because of good workmanship: the hand of the craftsman and not the design of the artist makes them good. Truly, there are no craftsmen in the world who have more polished workmanship or who have greater skill with their tools than the English. But, until now, they do not know how to execute designs in such good taste as foreign craftsmen in London can. This good taste has not spread from the shops of these craftsmen.

The arts do not merely fail to flourish in countries that are excessively hot or cold. There are temperate climates where they languish. The Spanish have had several magnificent sovereigns, and are as bewitched by the charms of painting as much as any pope has ever been. However, this nation, so productive of great

17 Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), German painter famed for portraiture.

18 Sir Peter Lely (1618–1680), Dutch painter who spent most of his career in England. He was popular at the court of Charles II.

19 van Dyck was a student of Rubens who was active at the court of Charles I.

20 Antonio Verrio (ca. 1636–1707), Naples-born painter who spent the bulk of his career in England. He introduced baroque mural painting into England.

21 Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), born in Germany and a leading portrait painter in late-17th and early-18th-century England.

22 Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), a leader of the Parliamentary armies in the English Civil War and Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1650 until his death.

23 Charles II (1630–1685), King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. King from the Restoration in 1660 until his death. James II (1633–1701), King of England and Ireland and, as James VI, King of Scotland, from 1685 until the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

24 John Roettiers (1631–1703), Antwerp-born English engraver and medalist. In 1661, he was invited to join the Royal Mint in London. He did excellent work; Samuel Pepys wrote that he produced "some of the finest pieces of work, in embossed work, that I ever did see in my life." (*Diary*, 26 March 1666).

25 Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721), Dutch-born English sculptor. Born in Rotterdam, Gibbons moved to England in 1667. His work in stone is found in Windsor Castle, Hampton Court Palace, and St. Paul's Cathedral. He is also regarded as one of the finest wood carvers in English history.

people, and even great writers in verse and in prose, has not had a painter of the first rank and we can scarcely find two Spaniards of the second. Charles V, Philip II, Philip IV, and Charles II[26] have been obliged to employ, to work at Escorial and elsewhere, foreign painters.

The liberal arts have never left Europe except to stroll, if it is permitted to speak thus, on the coasts of Asia and Africa. People born in Europe and coasts neighbouring Europe have always been more suited than other people to the arts, sciences, and politics. Wherever Europeans have carried their arms, they have subjected the native populations. Europeans have always won even when they are ten against thirty. Often Europeans have triumphed though they were ten against a hundred. Without mentioning here Alexander the Great and the Romans, one recalls the ease with which handfuls of Spaniards and Portuguese, assisted by their hard work and the weapons that they had brought from Europe, conquered the East and West Indies. To say that the Indians would not have been subjugated so easily if they had had the same military machines, the same arms, and the same discipline as their conquerors, only demonstrates the superior genius of our Europe. Europe invented all of these things without the Asians or Americans discovering anything equivalent, though they were continually at war against each other. If, by chance, the Chinese discovered gunpowder and printing before us, we so greatly perfected these two inventions, as soon as they were known to us, that Europeans are now in a position to give lessons to the Chinese. Our missionaries currently supervise the casting of their cannon, and we have given them books printed with moveable type. Everyone knows that the Chinese only printed using engraved plates that could only be used to print one thing. Moveable type, in contrast, can be used to print several different sheets, not to mention the several other efficiencies that they make available to printers. We print Virgil's *Aeneid* using the same letters that are used to print the New Testament. When Europeans reached China, the astronomers of that country, who for several centuries had been very well paid, could still not accurately predict eclipses. European astronomers have been able to predict them with precision for more than 2000 years.[27]

---

26 Known in Spanish as Carlos II (1661–1700), he was three when he ascended to the throne in 1665. He suffered from severe mental and physical disabilities.

27 Du Bos is wrong about Chinese astronomy. According to Hugh Thurston, "By 8 B.C. the Chinese could predict eclipses by using the 135–month period; and by A.D. 206 they could predict eclipses by analyzing the motion of the moon. By A.D. 390 they could predict how much of the moon would be in shadow." Hugh Thurston, *Early Astronomy* (New York: 1994), 85.

The arts appear to suffer as soon as they are too far from Europe, as soon as they lose sight of it. While the ancient Egyptians were the inventors of painting and sculpture, they do not possess to the same extent that the Greeks and Italians do, the glory of these two arts. The usual Egyptian sculptures, that is, the ones attached to antique buildings in Egypt, the ones on their obelisks and their mummies, are nowhere near the sculptures made in Greece and Italy. If we come across a sphinx of remarkable beauty, one can be sure that it is the work of some Greek sculptor who took it upon himself to make some Egyptian figures. Similarly, our painters sometimes amuse themselves by imitating in their works bas-reliefs and pictures from India and China. Do we not ourselves have craftsmen who amuse themselves by making sphinxes? The gardens at Versailles have several sphinxes that are models for our modern sculptors. Pliny made long lists of works by famous artists but did not praise in his book any masterpiece of painting or sculpture made by an Egyptian craftsman. Some Greek sculptors even went to work in Egypt [Diod. Sicul. Bk. 1].[28] To say what Pliny left unsaid, he lived when these Egyptian works still existed. Petronius wrote that the Egyptians could only produce poor painters.[29] He said that the Egyptians had harmed this art a lot by instituting rules that made painter's apprenticeships shorter and the practice less difficult.

Thirty years ago Sir John Chardin provided his drawings of the ruins of Persepolis.[30] His drawings show that the Kings of Persia, whom ancient history praises for their opulence, employed only mediocre craftsmen. Greek craftsmen, unlike Greek soldiers, apparently did not seek their fortune in the service of the King of Persia. Be that as it may, one is not very surprised after having seen his drawings that Alexander put to the torch a palace whose decoration seemed crude by comparison to what he had seen in Greece. Persians were, in the time of Darius,[31] like the Persians who inhabit the same country today:

28 Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* [The Library of History] 1. Diodorus Siculus (fl. 1st century BC), Greek historian.

29 Du Bos probably refers to Gaius Petronius (ca. 75–after 20 BC), governor of the Roman province of Egypt for two terms. Not to be confused with Gaius Petronius Arbiter, the Roman novelist.

30 Sir John Chardin (1643–1713), French-born traveler and jeweller. Born in Paris, Chardin spent several years traveling in Persia and other countries of the Middle East. A Protestant, he settled in England to avoid persecution. In England, he was knighted and appointed court jeweller. Du Bos refers to Chardin's *Journal du voiage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales* [Journal of the voyage of the Chevalier Chardin to Persia and to the West Indies] (1686).

31 Darius I, given the epithet 'the Great' (ca. 550–486 BC), King of the Achaemenid Empire.

very patient and able craftsmen when it comes to handicrafts, but devoid of the genius to create and without the ability to imitate the great beauties of nature.

These days, Europe is only too full of fabrics, porcelain, and other curiosities from China and East Asia. Nothing is less expressive than the taste of the design and colours that prevails in these works. Several Eastern poetical works have been translated. When we find a nice turn of phrase or a vraisemblable story, we admire it, but that is all there is to it. These translations are seldom reprinted and only enjoy a brief popularity that must be attributed to the exoticism of the original and the ill-considered love that people have for unusual things. The same curiosity that makes people run after the compatriots of the authors of these works, when they appear in France, dressed in the fashion of their country, makes people read these translations when they are new.

If the Indians and ancient Persians had had any poets of Homer's rank, the Greeks who traveled to enrich their libraries, as other people journey to fill their coffers, would have appropriated them by a translation. One of their princes would have had a Greek translation made, as one of the Ptolemaic dynasty[32] is said to have had the Bible translated into Greek, even though this pagan prince only regarded it as a book that some people were able to write.

When the Spaniards discovered America, they found two great empires that had flourished for several hundred years: the Mexican and the Peruvian. They had long practiced the art of painting. These people, with an inconceivable patience and handicraft, had even invented the art of making a kind of mosaic with bird feathers. It is wonderful that the hand of man has enough adeptness to arrange and form into coloured figures such different strands. But since genius is lacking in these people, they are, despite their dexterity, crude artisans. They possess neither the simplest rules of design, nor the first principles of composition, perspective, and *chiaroscuro*. They do not even know how to paint with minerals and other natural colours that come from their country. Subsequently, they have seen the best pictures from Italy, which the Spanish have transported to the new world in large numbers. Their masters [i.e., the Spanish] have even taught them how paintbrushes and colours should be used, but without being able to make the [indigenous] painters capable. Native Americans have learned other arts so well from the Spanish that they have become, for example, better masons than their masters. But they have found within their reach nothing in European pictures, except the vivacity of bright colours. They have imitated this with success. They have

32 The Ptolemaic dynasty ruled Egypt from 305 until 30 BC. Originally from Macedonia, the Ptolemies were the last Egyptian dynasty prior to the conquest of Egypt by Rome.

even surpassed their models in this respect, from what I have heard from people who have seen in Mexico several domes painted by Native American artists.

The Chinese are fascinated by the pictures of their country, but have little taste for European pictures. They say that these pictures have too many black patches: this is what they call the shadows. After having reflected on all of the points that I have stated, and several others that are generally known and which support our position, we cannot help being of the opinion of Fontenelle. He said, in speaking of the knowledge and turn of mind of easterners, "In reality, I think still more and more, that there is a certain genius which has never yet been out of the limits of Europe, or at least not much beyond them" [*Plurality of Worlds, Sixth Evening*].[33]

There are countries in which human causes have never hatched great painters or great poets. There are also times in which human causes have not molded great artists, even in countries which, in others, produced them easily, and so to speak, freely. This proves even more that capricious nature seems to give birth to great artists only when it pleases.

Prior to Julius II, Italy had had popes who were generous toward painters and men of letters without their munificence causing any artist to take flight. No artist had attained the peak of perfection reached by people of his profession who appeared in great numbers during the pontificate of Julius II. For a long time, Lorenzo de' Medici[34] spent so regally at Florence that everyone was obliged to give him the epithet 'the Magnificent.' Most of his expenditures were gifts that he distributed with a fine eye for all sorts of *virtù*. The Bentivoglios[35] did the same thing in Bologna, as did the House of Este[36] in Ferrara. The Visconti and the Sforsi[37] had been Milanese benefactors of the fine arts. No one

33 Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* [A Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds] (1686), 140. This important work was a popular exposition of the Copernican system of astronomy. It is divided into a series of evenings, rather than chapters.

34 Not everyone would agree with Du Bos' verdict on the efficacy of his patronage.

35 The House of Bentivoglio. Giovanni I declared himself Lord of Bologna in 1401. His successors ruled Bologna until the early 16th century.

36 The branch of the House of Este to which Du Bos refers ruled Ferrara from 1240–1597. Ferrara first became a centre for the arts during the reign of Niccolò III (1384–1441). Ercole d'Este (1431–1505) was one of the most important Renaissance patrons of the arts. Ferrara was, in particular, a centre of music. Renowned musicians such as Josquin des Prez were in the employ of Ercole.

37 The House of Visconti ruled Milan from 1277–1447. After a short-lived republic, the House

then appeared who could be ranked among those who came subsequently, when the arts and sciences were, so to speak, renewed. It seems as though great people of all kinds who, according to ordinary ways of thinking ought to be distributed throughout several eras, waited until the pontificate of Julius II to appear.

Let us now turn our eyes on what was happening in France with respect to poetry and painting. Did the human causes wait until Le Sueur, Le Brun, Corneille, La Fontaine, and Racine came along to favour poetry and painting? Can we say that we have seen human causes followed so immediately by the effects that we can attribute to these causes the surprising success of great artists in our country? Before Francis I we had had kings who were generous to people of merit. Nevertheless, their largesse did not procure, during their reigns, the honour of having produced a French poet or painter whom posterity can compare with those who were created under Louis XIII and Louis XIV. From that time, there scarcely remain some fragments of verse or prose that we read with pleasure. The Chancellor de l'Hôpital[38] said in a speech, delivered to the Estates General assembled at Orléans, "Good King Louis XII[39] took pleasure in hearing farces and comedies, even those which took great liberties, since by this means he learned a lot of things that were happening in his kingdom that he would otherwise never have known" [In 1561]. Of all of the farces composed under Louis XII or earlier, that of *Pathelin*[40] is the only one that has retained a place in our libraries.

Great King Francis [I] was glorified by his ardent defence of the arts and letters. We know what favour or, to speak more exactly, what friendship he showed to Master Roux,[41] Andrea del Sarto, and to all people distinguished by their talent or their merit. Leonardo da Vinci[42] died in his arms. We know the extrava-

---

of Sforza ruled, with some interruptions, until 1535. Ludovico Maria Sforza (1452–1508), was a patron of Leonardo da Vinci and other artists.

38 Michel de l'Hôpital (1507–1573), French statesman. During the reigns of the young and sickly Francis II and his younger brother Charles IX, l'Hôpital was Chancellor of France. He was particularly known for promoting domestic peace by favouring toleration of Protestants.

39 Louis XII (1462–1515), King of France from 1489 to 1515.

40 *La farce de Maître Pathelin* (1457) is an anonymous farce that was extremely popular in its day and for a good while after.

41 Giovanni Battista di Jacopo (1494–1540), also known as Rosso Fiorentino (Red Florentine, on account of his hair colour) and, in French, as Maître Roux, Italian Mannerist painter and student of Andrea del Sarto.

42 Leonardo da Vinci died in France, enjoying the patronage of Francis I.

gance with which he paid for the paintings he commissioned Raphael to make. His generosity and warm welcome attracted painters to France. Though these continued throughout his reign of thirty-three years, they could not generate a great painter from among his subjects. The painters who settled in France at that time died there without students, at least without students worthy of them. In the same manner, animals that are transported to a climate very different from their own die without leaving descendants.

This generous king did not love poetry less than painting; he even wrote verse himself. His sister, Marguerite de Valois,[43] the first of two Queens of Navarre who bore that name, also wrote. We still have an entire volume of her poems, published under the name *Marguerites Françoises*.[44] The reign of Francis I produced a huge number of poems, but those of Clément Marot[45] and Saint Gelais,[46] are almost the only ones of which we read something today. The others now only decorate libraries, where rare books have as much right to be as good ones. The changes to our language do not prevent us from reading with pleasure the pieces that Marot wrote and that come within the scope of his genius, which did not suit him to large-scale works. Consequently, these would not prevent us from reading the works of his contemporaries, if they had also put in their works the same beauties that the poets of the era of Louis XIV put in theirs.

Henry II and Diane de Valentinois[47] greatly enjoyed the arts. Charles IX honoured them at the cost of his life, so to speak, and the verses that he composed for Ronsard[48] were equal to the best by that illustrious poet.

---

43 Marguerite de Narvarre (as she was known after her marriage to Henry II of Navarre) (1492–1549). Like her brother Francis, Marguerite was an active patron of the arts and, as Du Bos notes, was also an author of some renown. At his time the ruling house in France was the House of Valois.

44 Du Bos is mistaken. *Les Marguerites Françoises* was a common-place book that was wildly popular between 1598 and 1637, published in eleven editions. It is not written by Marguerite de Navarre, but the title is likely a pun on and an allusion to her name. 'Marguerite' means 'pearl,' thus these are so-called 'pearls of French wisdom.' Organized alphabetically by single words (such as 'Affections,' 'Afflictions,' etc.), followed by a sometimes witty, sometimes moralizing, sentence.

45 Clément Marot (1496–1544), French poet. He moved in the circles of Francis I and his sister Marguerite.

46 Mellin de Saint-Gelais (1491–1558), French poet; Poet Laureate during the reign of Francis I. He enjoyed a brief period of popularity before falling out of fashion.

47 Henry II (1519–1559), King of France. The son of Francis I, he reigned 1547 until his death as the result of an injury sustained in a tournament. Diane of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, a prominent courtier at the court of Henry II and a patron of the arts. When Henry sustained his fatal wound, his lance carried Diane's favour, rather than his wife's.

48 Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), the most distinguished French poet of the 16th century.

Ta lyre qui ravit par de si doux accords
Te donne les esprits dont je n'ai que le corps,
Le maître elle t'en rend, et te sçait introduire,
Où le plus fier Tyran ne peut avoit d'empire.[49]

This prince made the famous Jacques Amyot, son of a butcher from Melun, grand Almonder of France.[50] Everyone knows to what excess Henry III[51] carried his extravagant spending on the French Pleiades,[52] the group of the seven most distinguished stars of French poetry during his reign. He certainly did not practice with regard to these poets the maxim of his brother Charles IX (that we have already mentioned) concerning the support that should be given to poets. All of the bright minds who lived under Henry III, even those who frequently abused their abilities by preaching or writing against him, benefited from his prodigality. In the time of which I speak, poets and scholars were admitted into a kind of familiarity with our kings. They enjoyed as much intimacy and were as welcome as the most highborn members of the court. However, neither all of these graces nor all of these honours gave anyone enough stamina to climb to the heights of Parnassus. All of this encouragement did not bear much fruit in a country in which an affable smile was enough to send twenty high-ranking people to cheerfully attack a breach in which death was almost certain.

The essence of a court consists in enthusiastically entering into the tastes of its masters and French courts always espouse their tastes with more passion than other courts. So I leave the reader to reflect whether it was the fault of human causes that no Molière or Corneille developed at the court of the Valois. Terence,[53] Plautus, Horace, Virgil, and the other fine authors of antiquity, who contributed so much to the development of the poets of the 17th century,

---

49 "Your lyre that delights by such sweet chords
Gives you the spirits of which I have only the body,
She gives you the master, and you know how to introduce yourself,
Where the most proud Tyrant may not have empire."

50 The office of the Grand Almoner of France was created by Francis I. The Grand Almoner was responsible for the Royal Chapel. Jacques Amyot (1513–1593), from humble beginnings rose to be a prominent French man of letters. He become Grand Almoner in 1561.

51 Henry III (1551–1589), King of France from 1574 until his death.

52 The Pleiades (French: *Pléïades*) were a group of 16th-century French poets, the most notable of whom was Ronsard. The name referred to a group of 3rd century BC poets from Alexandria. Their name, in turn, refers to the seven stars of the Pleiades star cluster.

53 Publius Terentius Afer, known in English as Terence (ca. 190–159 BC), Roman playwright of African descent, famous for his comedies.

were all ready to hand for the bright minds at the court of Francis I and Henry III. Was it because Ronsard and his contemporaries did not know the ancient languages that they produced works in a style that resembles so little the style of fine Greek and Roman works? On the contrary, the greatest of their faults is that they have imitated too slavishly. They have tried to speak Greek and Latin with French words.

The late king [Louis XIV] established, to support the arts of design, foundations as judicious and as grand as any the Romans could have made. In order to give young people born with a genius for painting all imaginable facilities to develop their talents, he founded for them an academy in Rome. He established for them a home in the capital of the fine arts. Students who show a spark of genius are supported there long enough to have the leisure to learn whatever they are capable of knowing. Rewards and respect await skillful craftsmen. Sometimes we have even seen them display signs of merit. However, fifty years of care and subsidies have scarcely produced three or four painters whose works bear the marks of immortality.

We even see that the three French painters who were such a great honour to our nation during the reign of Louis XIV owed nothing to these foundations. They had developed before these foundations were established. In 1661, the year in which King Louis XIV took the reins of government, and when his era began, Poussin was sixty-seven years old and Le Sueur was dead. Le Brun was already forty, and if the generosity of the prince encouraged him to work, it had not made him capable of excelling. In short, nature, which Louis the Great had so often forced to bend to his will, steadily refused to obey him in this matter. Nature has not wanted to produce in his era the quantity of able painters that it produced by itself in the era of Leo X. The physical causes must conflict with the human causes. Thus this prince has not seen in France a school comparable to those that were established in other times at Rome, Venice, and Bologna.

Louis XIV's vast expenditures succeeded only in developing a large number of excellent sculptors. Someone is a good sculptor who knows how to sculpt beautiful statues. Since, in order to deserve the title of a good sculptor, someone need not have created those great works of which we spoke in the first part of our *Reflections*, we can say that sculpture does not require as much genius as painting does. The sovereign who could not find a certain quantity of young people who could, with the assistance that he has given them, become one day Raphaels or Carraccis, could find a large number who can, with his aid, become good sculptors. Thus, a school that has been founded when the physical causes do not complement the human causes gives birth to excellent sculptors and engravers, rather than painters of the first rank. This is precisely what we have seen happen in France. Since the renewal of the arts, we have never seen any-

where the great number of excellent sculptors and good engravers, in all genres and of every type, as we have seen in France during the reign of the late King.

The Italians, from whom we learned the art of sculpture, have long since been reduced to using our craftsmen. Puget, a sculptor from Marseilles [Died at Marseilles in 1695, at the age of 72],[54] was chosen in preference to several Italian sculptors, to carve two of the four statues intended to adorn niches in the pilasters which support the dome of the magnificent church of Santa Maria di Carignano in Genoa. The sculpture of St. Sebastian and St. Alejandro Paoli are by him. I do not want to damage the reputation of Domenico Guidi who sculpted St. John the Baptist,[55] or that of the craftsman who sculpted St. Bartholomew,[56] but today the Genoese regret that Puget did not do all four statues. When the Jesuits of Rome built, about forty-five years ago, the altar of St. Ignatius in the Church of the Jesus, they issued a tender for two groups of five white marble figures which were to be placed on either side of this superb monument. The most able sculptors in Italy each presented his model and, after these were displayed, it was decided on the basis of public option that one by Théodon,[57] then sculptor of the decorations in St. Peter, and one by Le Gros,[58] both Frenchmen, were the best. They made the two groups that are today regarded as among the masterpieces of modern Rome. The bronze railing that encloses this altar, composed of angels playing in rows of vines mixed with ears of corn, is also the work of a French sculptor. The five best brass engravers that we have seen were French by birth or by education. It is the same with engravers using other metals. Large- and small-scale goldsmithing, in short, all the arts of design, are more perfected in France than anywhere else. But, since painting does not depend as much on human causes as do the arts of which I have just spoken, it has not made progress proportional to the assistance that it has received in the past eighty years.

54 Pierre Paul Puget (1620–1694), French painter, sculptor, and architect. (Note that Du Bos is wrong about the date of his death and his age at death.) He moved to Genoa in 1660 and executed the statues of St. Sebastian and Bishop Alejandro Paoli for the church of Santa Maria di Carignano (1668).

55 This sculpture was actually made by Filippo Parodi (1630–1702), an Italian sculptor of the baroque period.

56 The sculptor in question is Claude David (fl. 17th century).

57 Jean-Baptiste Théodon (1645–1713), French sculptor, educated at the French Academy of Rome. He worked mainly in Rome but contributed to the Royal Chapel at Versailles.

58 Pierre Le Gros the Younger (1666–1710), French sculptor. Like Théodon, he studied at the French Academy in Rome and spent most of his life in that city.

Second Reflection: That the Arts Arrive at Their Peak by Sudden Progress, and That the Effects of Human Causes Cannot Sustain Them at the Point of Perfection, Where They Seem To Be Held Up by Their Own Devices.

That was my first reason for showing that humans are not born with as much genius in one country as in another, nor in the same country are they born with as much genius at one time as at another. The second reason seems as strong as the first. It is this: there are times when, after a few years, humans reach a surprising point of perfection in the very arts and professions they fruitlessly cultivated for many centuries. This phenomenon occurs without human causes providing anything new that could account for such miraculous progress. On the contrary, arts and sciences decline when human causes redouble their efforts to sustain them at a given height where, by some secret influence, they seem to have been raised.

The reader can already see the facts I will use to show that progress toward perfection in the fine arts occurs suddenly and all at once, and that the arts, breaking through a long span of time, spring from their dawn to their noon. Beginning in the 13th century, painting was reborn in Italy under Cimabue's brush [Born in 1240].[59] Many painters became famous in the following two centuries, although none excelled. Although highly praised in their day, these painters' works became the sort of thing in Italy that Ronsard's poems became in France: they are no longer sought out.

In 1480, painting was still a coarse art in Italy, after two hundred years of non-stop cultivation. They drew nature scrupulously, but without giving it its nobility. They completed heads with so much care that one could count the strands of hair on beards and heads. The draperies were brilliantly coloured and enhanced with gold. Craftsmen's hands had acquired some skills, but their works had but the slightest fire, the slightest spark of genius. No one imagined the beauties that can be drawn from the naked body represented in action. They had not yet made a single discovery in *chiaroscuro* or aerial perspective, nor in the elegant contours and beautiful flow of draperies. The painters could arrange the figures of a painting, but without knowing how to arrange them following today's well-known rules of pictorial composition. Before Raphael and

59 Cimabue (ca. 1240–1302), Italian painter and mosaic designer, also known as Cenni di Pepo. Cimabue was famed for his great advancements over Byzantine-style art, especially for making figures more lifelike. Du Bos likely read of Cimabue in Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, where Vasari credits Cimabue for keeping painting alive as an artform.

his contemporaries, the martyring of a saint would not have moved a single spectator. The attendees introduced by the painter into the tragic action were there simply to fill the space on the canvas left open by the saint and his torturers.

At the end of the 15th century painting which had, until then, slowly and nearly imperceptibly crept toward perfection suddenly began making giant strides. Painting, still Gothic, had begun adornments of several buildings, whose final developments were the masterworks of Raphael and his contemporaries. Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici [Leo X], who, having become Pope at thirty-seven, had not grown old while a cardinal, renovated the Church of San Pietro in Montorio,[60] and started the work just after he received his purple robe. The chapels to the left of the entrance, which were the first to be made, were decorated with works of painting and sculpture of a mediocre style, and they remained in the Gothic style. But the chapels facing them were decorated by craftsmen who can be counted among first class artists. The first after entering the church is painted by Sebastiano del Piombo.[61] Another is embellished with statues by Daniele da Volterra.[62] Finally, above the high altar we see Raphael's *Transfiguration*,[63] a painting as well known among nations as Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The destiny of sculpture was the same as that of painting. It was as if artists' eyes, closed until that moment, were opened by some miracle. A poet once said that every new work by Raphael creates a painter. But human causes did no more to favour artists than what they had unproductively done in the past two centuries. The ancient statues and bas-reliefs from which Raphael and his contemporaries benefitted so greatly were right in front of their predecessors' eyes, but they did not know what to do with them. If we unearthed some ancient works that their predecessors had not seen, how many had they seen that perished before Raphael could see them? Why did their predecessors not dig about in the ruins of ancient Rome, as Raphael and his contemporaries did? It is because they lacked genius. They did not recognize their own taste in Marcus Aurelius, or in all the works of sculpture and architecture, which were out of the ground long before Raphael.

---

60 A Roman church dating to the 9th century. It was extensively redecorated during the 16th and 17th centuries by major artists.

61 Sebastiano del Piombo (ca. 1485–1547), Italian painter from the Venetian School who famously combined their techniques with those of the Roman School.

62 Daniele Ricciarelli (ca. 1509–1566), Italian painter and sculptor who was known as Daniele da Volterra. He was close friends with and worked with Michelangelo.

63 *Transfiguration* was the last painting by Raphael before his death in 1520. It depicts the transfiguration of Jesus. Parts of it remained unfinished at his death, although it was substantially complete.

The wonder that happened in Rome happened simultaneously in Venice, Florence, and other Italian cities. Emerging from underground, so to speak, were men forever famous, and who were head and shoulders above the masters who taught them. They were men without precedent, students with proper genius. More than anywhere, Venice abounded in excellent painters, even though the Republic had not, of late, founded new academies, nor proposed new prizes for painting. The happy influences that diffused from painting sought out Corregio in his home town, and they created a great painter with a peculiar character. He was the first who dared to set figures in air, creating a 'ceiling,' as painters say. In painting the *Marriage of Psyche* on the vaulted ceiling of the Little Farnese, Raphael treated his subject as if he had painted it on a tapestry hanging from the ceiling. Corregio put figures into the air in the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which he painted in the dome of the Cathedral of Parma, and in the *Ascension of Jesus Christ*, which he painted on the dome of the Abbey of Saint Giovanni in the same city. This alone reveals the effects of physical causes in the renewal of the arts. All the schools formed at that time journeyed to the beautiful by different paths. Their styles did not resemble one another, although they were all so good that we would have been vexed had each school not pursued its own. *Omnes inter se dissimiles, ita tamen ut neminem velis esse sui dissimilem* [Cic. *Orat*. bk. 3].[64]

The north also received some rays of this influence. Albrecht Dürer,[65] Holbein, and Lucas van Leyden[66] painted infinitely better than anyone had ever done in their country before. Many paintings by Holbein are preserved in the office of the library in Basel, and two of these paintings provide excellent evidence of the surprising progress painting made wherever there were people capable of being painters. The first of these paintings, whose inscription on the bottom reveals it was made in 1516, depicts a school teacher showing children how to read.[67] It has all the faults for which we criticized paintings done before Raphael. The second painting depicting a descent from the cross, whose inscription reveals it was made in 1521, exhibits good taste.[68] Holbein saw new

64 Cicero, *Orator* 3.6.26: "all of whom were different from one another, yet without the consequence of our desiring any one of them to be different from what he was."

65 Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), painter and theorist. Best known for his woodcut prints, Dürer was also an expert printmaker.

66 Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533), engraver and painter.

67 The painting is *Principles of a Schoolmaster, Teaching Scene for Children* [Leitsätze eines Schulmeisters, Szene Unterrict für Kinder] by Hans Holbein the Younger.

68 The painting is *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. Common to this period, this is one of many depictions of Christ's descent from the cross, although this image depicts Christ already lying on a slab draped with a cloth.

paintings and profited from doing so, in the same way as Raphael benefitted from seeing Michelangelo's work. The Autel altarpiece depicting the key events of the Passion in eight separate paintings conserved at the Hôtel-de-Ville in Basel, must have been painted by Holbein before the abolition of Catholicism in Basel,[69] where the so-called Reformation was introduced and paintings were removed from the churches in 1527.[70] These eight paintings can be compared to the best works of Raphael's students for their artistry, and are preferable to them for their colouring. There is greater intelligence with *chiaroscuro* than in other painters of that time. Note the marvellous presence of light, especially in the painting depicting Christ being taken as prisoner in the *Jardin des Oliviers*.[71]

With regard to poetry, under the reign of Louis XIII in France, our fathers saw the same thing that happened in Italy under the reign of Julius II. After a feeble dawn, there was suddenly a bright, gleaming day. Our poetry advanced all at once, and foreign countries, where it had been disdained until then, suddenly embraced it. To the best of my recollection, Pierre Corneille was the first of the secular French poets whose large-scale work was translated into foreign languages.

We find admirable stanzas in the works of many French poets who wrote before the time that I call the start of the era of splendour for French poetry. Malherbe[72] has no peers in the metre and cadence of his verses; but since Malherbe had a good ear rather than genius, most of the stanzas of his works are praiseworthy for their technique and for their harmonious arrangement of words, for which he had a marvellous talent. At that time, poems did not need to be composed of *contiguous beauties*, so to speak. A few brilliant passages were enough to make an entire work worthy of admiration. One could excuse the weakness of the other verses, which could be regarded simply as elements that provide links between the excellent verses: they were called 'passage-verses,' as we learned in the *Memoirs* of the Abbé Marolles.[73]

---

69 The Reformation in Switzerland was effected by Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) during the Affair of the Sausages (1522), when he publicly encouraged eating sausages during Lent. The Church in Basel was reformed in 1527, along with churches in many other Swiss cities.

70 The paintings are known as the *Passion Altarpiece*, located in Basel. Their attribution to Holbein has been doubted: see Frederic George Stephens "Hans Holbein the Younger, Designer and Portrait Painter, and another Designer at Basle," *The Portfolio* 13 (1882), 12–17.

71 There are two paintings by Nicholas Poussin called *Christ in the Garden of Oliviers*, one painted in 1626 and the other in 1628.

72 François de Malherbe (1555–1628), French critic and poet. He was inclined to classicism and was known to be a harsh critic.

73 Michel de Marolles (1600–1681), French churchman and translator of Latin poetry and

There are stanzas in the works of Desportes[74] and Bertaut[75] comparable to all the best works written since Corneille. But those who undertake to read all the works of these two poets on the basis of a few passages they have heard recited will immediately abandon them. The books are similar to those mountain ranges, where one must traverse wild and savage land before coming upon a charming, well-kept valley.

For two hundred years we have had tragic theatre, ever since Corneille wrote *El Cid*. What progress have we made in drama? None. Corneille found our theatre nearly as barbarous as it was under Louis XII. Drama made more progress between 1635 and 1665, improving more in those thirty years than it had in the three preceding centuries. Rotrou debuted at the same time as Corneille; Racine, Molière, and Quinault came soon after. Could one see in Garnier[76] and Mairet[77] a drama sufficiently perfected to hope that notable poets like Corneille and Molière might soon appear? Who were, so to speak, Fontaine's poetic ancestors? To say a word about our painters, were Fréminet[78] and Vouet,[79] who worked under the reign of Louis XIII, the precursors of Poussin, Le Sueur, and Le Brun?

---

the Bible. He also collected prints totalling 123, 000. In 1656 he published *Les Mémoires de Michel de Marolles, abbé de Villeloin, divisés en trois parties, contenant ce qu'il a vu de plus remarquable en sa vie, depuis l'année 1600, ses entretiens avec quelques-uns des plus savants hommes de son temps, et les généalogies de quelques familles alliées dans la sienne; avec une briève description de la très-illustre maison de Mantoue et de Nevers* [The Memoirs of Michael of Marolles, abby of Villeloin, divided into three parts, containing the most remarkable things he saw in his life since the year 1600, his engagements with some of the most learned men of his day, and genealogies of some families affiliated with his own; with a brief description of the very famous home of Mantoue and Nevers]. See 265: "*Et ceux qui veulent que tous les vers d'un poëme heroïque soient égaux en beauté, n'ont pas pris garde que dans Homere et Virgile, sans parler de tant d'autres dont la reputation est si bien establie, il y en a plusieurs que nous pouvons appeller vers de passage, dans lesquels non seulement ne se trouvent pas tous les charmes de la poësie, mais ceux qui les composent se doivent mesmes bien empescher de les y employer.*" [And those who would like every line in a heroic poem to be equal in beauty, they should only be aware of Homer and Virgil, without referring to so many others whose reputation is so well established. There are many that we can call 'verses' in which, not only will poetic charms not be found, but those who wrote them prevented themselves from using them.]

74 Phillippe Desportes (1546–1606), French poet.

75 Jean Bertaut (1552–1611), French poet.

76 Robert Garnier (1544–1590), French poet.

77 Jean Mairet (1604–1686), French dramatist.

78 Martin Fréminet (1567–1619), French painter.

79 Simon Vouet (1590–1649), French painter credited with introducing Italian baroque-style painting to France.

The great men who worked during what is called the age of Augustus were not moulded during those happy days of that Emperor's reign. They acquired their skills and were moulded before those happy days began. No one can deny that the first years of the age of Augustus were a period of sword and blood. The most blessed days of the entire universe began after the Battle of Actium, where the protective Roman genius overthrew Anthony, Discord, and Cleopatra in a single blow.[80] When this occurred, Virgil was forty years old. Here is the description he put forward during the very time he was being moulded, which with such elegance he describes as the reign of Mars and Fury:

Quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas; tot bella per orbem,
Tam multa scelerum facies, non ullus aratro
Dignus honor; squallent abductis arva colonis,
Et curvae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.
Hinc movet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum;
Vicinae ruptis inter se legibus urbes
Arma ferunt, saevit toto Mars impius orbe.
[*Georg.* bk. 1][81]

During all the horrors and proscriptions of those first years of Augustus' reign, men who made a distinguished name for themselves were even more exposed than others. Cicero, whose throat was cut during these miserable times of which Virgil speaks, died the victim of his talents.[82]

Largus et exundans leto dedit ingenii fons
Ingenio manus est et cervis caesa.
[Juven. *Sat.* 10][83]

---

80 The Battle of Actium took place at the very end of the final war of the Roman Republic on 2 September 31 BC between Octavian (later Augustus) and Mark Antony, who was supported by an alliance with Cleopatra. Marcus Antonius, better known as Marc Antony (83–30 BC), Roman politician.

81 Virgil, *Georgics* 1.505–511: "For here are right and wrong inverted; so many wars overrun the world, sin walks in so many shapes; respect for the plough is gone; our lands, robbed of the tillers, lie waste, and curved pruning hooks are forged into straight blades. Here Euphrates, there Germany, calls to arms; breaking the covenants which bind them, neighbouring cities draw the sword; the god of unholy strife rages throughout the world."

82 Cicero was killed on Mark Antony's orders after Cicero attacked his politics in a series of speeches.

83 Juvenal, *Satires* 10, 119–120: "It was the abundant, overflowing gush of talent that sent both to their deaths. It was talent that had its hands and neck severed." Juvenal refers also to Demosthenes (384–322 BC), Greek orator and politician.

Horace was thirty-five when the Battle of Actium took place. Augustus' magnificence greatly encouraged these great poets to work, but they were already destined to be great before they received this encouragement.

With regard to the sudden progress of arts and letters in certain periods of time, what can completely convince us that human causes concur with yet another, second force that is stronger than them, is that arts and letters fall into decay when human causes are the only things sustaining them at the height they had achieved on their own. These great men who were, so to speak, made with their own hands, cannot either by their lessons or their examples, mould students of their calibre. Their successors, who receive instruction from excellent teachers and who, for that reason and many others, would surpass their teachers if they had their genius, occupy their place without replacing them. The first successors of great masters are replaced by lesser men. In the end, the genius of arts and sciences disappears until the revolution of eras comes to raise them from the graves where they lay buried for many eras, after being on display for a few years.

In that same country where nature generously, and without extraordinary assistance, produced famous painters during the time of Leo X, neither the rewards and care from the Academy of Saint Luke, established by Gregory XIII[84] and Sixtus V,[85] nor the attention of the sovereigns, nor even all the support from human causes, could give successors to these great artists born without ancestors. The Schools of Venice and Florence degenerated and were annihilated within sixty years. True, painting remained in splendour in Rome for a great many years. Great masters could still be seen up to the middle of the last century. But these painters were foreigners, such as Poussin, Carracci's students, who brought the talents of the School of Bologna to Rome, and several others. Since that school flourished later than that of Rome, it also survived the Roman school. If you pardon the phrase, there were no young trees that grew up beside those great oaks. In thirty years of hard work in a workshop in the middle of Rome, Poussin he did not produce a single student who made a name for himself in painting, even though this great man was more capable of teaching art than any other who has ever taught. In the same city, but at a different time, Raphael, who died when he was as young as his students, molded

84 Pope Gregory XIII (1502–1585), who was said to have introduced the Gregorian calendar.

85 The *Accademia di San Luca* was an artists' association in Rome. Heavily overseen by the Church, this academy was immensely important for art education, theory and criticism, and influenced the structure and purpose of many other academies of art throughout Europe. See Peter M. Lukehart, (ed.), *The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c. 1590–1635* (New Haven, Connecticut: 2010). Pope Sixtus V (1521–1590), also known as Cardinal Montalto.

a school of five or six painters in the course of ten or twelve years. Their works were part of the glory of their master. In the end, all the Italian schools, Venice, Rome, Parma and Bologna, where great figures multiplied themselves so easily during good times, are now completely empty.

This decline arrived precisely at the time when Italy enjoyed its happiest days since the barbarian destruction of the Roman Empire. If it were true that this future depended entirely on human causes, all those factors that would decide the future of the fine arts would have concurred in making them flourish when they had fallen into decline. The Italian wars lasted from the time of the expedition of our King Charles VIII to Naples until the peace agreement made in Cambrai in 1529 between Charles V and Francis I, which was soon followed by the last revolution in the state of Florence. For thirty-four years, Italy had been trampled under the feet of barbarous nations, to use an expression familiar to historians. The kingdom of Naples was conquered four or five times by different princes, and the state of Milan changed leadership even more frequently. On many occasions Venetians saw armed enemies emerge from their turrets, and Florence was nearly always at war, either against the Medici who wanted to enslave the city,[86] or against the people of Pisa, who wanted to control it. Rome witnessed on more than one occasion enemy or suspicious troops inside its walls, and this capital city of fine arts was plundered by the armies of Emperor Charles V with as much barbarity as if it had been attacked by the Turks. It was precisely during these thirty-four years in Italy that arts and letters seemed to make progress as dramatic as it makes today.

From the last revolution in the state of Florence until the end of the 16th century, Italy's respite was interrupted only by wars at their frontiers, or for very short periods of time. None of its great cities was attacked, and there were no more violent revolutions in the five principal states into which it is divided. Neither the Germans nor the French invaded them, except for the expedition of the Duke of Guise to Naples under Paul IV, which was an attempt at gaining an inroad, rather than a war.[87] The 17th century in Italy was a time of repose and abundance, right up until the last year. Throughout this time of which I have spoken, the Venetians amassed immense sums of money, and they made that famous chain of gold to which they added more money every year. Sixtus V

86 The House of Medici was a prominent, powerful political dynasty from Tuscany. They controlled the largest European bank, the Medici Bank, brokered power in the Vatican, and generally dominated Italian political culture during this time. At the same time, however, they were great benefactors of art and culture.

87 Charles de Lorraine, 4th Duke of Guise (1571–1640) moved to Florence in 1631 and enjoyed the protection of the House of Medici.

added to his apostolic treasure five million pieces of gold; the bank of Genoa replenished itself; the Grand Dukes collected enormous sums; the Dukes of Ferrara filled their coffers. In a word, with the exception of the Viceroys of Naples and the government of Milan, everyone governing in Italy found, after the usual and cautionary expenses, a superfluity of revenue saved each year. This is the best sign of a flourishing state. Nevertheless, during these years of prosperity, the Schools of Rome, Florence, and Venice, and later that of Bologna became impoverished and lost their good students. Their high point occurred very close to the start, but their low point was not far from that. I do not want to prejudge the decline of our era, even though a very intelligent man wrote that forty years have passed since great works have been produced. "It must be agreed in good faith that it has been nearly ten years since this good period has passed" [*M. de Fontenelle, Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*].[88] Before he died, Boileau saw a lyric poet take flight.[89] He was born with the talents of an ancient poet, to whom Virgil gave the place of honour in the Elysian Fields for having first taught morality to savage men. The works of these ancient poets, which were one of the first bonds of society and gave place to the fable of Amphion,[90] did not contain wiser maxims than the odes of the author of whom I speak, to whom nature seems to have given the genius to fashion morality and to make virtue inviting. Other living poets deserve honourable mention for their works. But, as Velleius Paterculus said about a very similar situation, *Vivorum censura difficilis*.[91] It is a delicate matter to *judge* living poets.

If we return to the age of Augustus, we will see that arts and letters, and primarily poetry, fell into decline just when everything conspired to sustain them. They degenerated during the best years of the Roman Empire. Many people thought that arts and letters perished, buried beneath the ruins of a monarchy subverted and devastated by northern nations. They thus supposed that the barbarian invasions, following upon the complete upheaval of society in most established places, deprived the conquered people of the material conditions necessary for cultivating arts and letters, and even of the desire to practice them. The arts, they said, cannot survive in a country where all the cities have turned to empty fields, and the fields into deserts.

---

88 Fontenelle, *Digressions on the Ancients and Moderns*, 276.

89 Du Bos refers to La Fontaine.

90 In Greek mythology, Amphion and Zethus are twin brothers and sons of Zeus. They built the city walls in Thebes, a city named after Zethus' wife Thebe. Their role is parallel to that of Romulus and Remus of Rome.

91 Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History* 2.36.3: "censure of the living is difficult."

Tanti causa mali Latio gens aspera aperto
Saepius irrumpens, sunt jussi vertere morem
Ausonidae victi.
[*Vida Poët. lib. prim.*][92]

This opinion is no less false for its being commonly held. False opinions are established just as easily in history as in philosophy. Even if they had been cultivated with care, arts and letters had already fallen into decline. They had already degenerated when those nations, the scourge of humankind, set off from the northern snows. We can regard the bust of Caracalla as the last gasp of Roman sculpture.[93] The two triumphal arches erected to honour his father Severus,[94] the capitals on the columns in the Septizodium,[95] which were transported to different churches when that building was torn down,[96] and the remaining statues known to have been made during that time, show that sculpture and architecture had already fallen under the control of that Emperor and his children. Everyone knows that the bas-reliefs on the larger of the two triumphal arches are badly done. We can nonetheless believe that the most able sculptors were employed to do them, but only out of regard for the location where it was erected. This was in the most significant part of the city at the foot of the *Forum Romanum*[97] and, as we have reason to believe, at the foot of the stairs intended for walking to the Capitol, called *the hundred steps*. Severus reigned two centuries before the sack of Rome by Alaric.[98] Since then, the arts have been constantly degenerating.

---

92 Horace Vida, *On the Art of Poetry* 1.187–189: "The harsh people rushing so often into open Latium with a motive of such evil, the conquered Ausones were forced to change their custom."

93 Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Augustus (188–217), known as 'Caracalla,' was Roman emperor from 198–217. Caracalla, like many Roman emperors during the Severan dynasty, was murdered. The *Bust of Emperor Caracalla* was sculpted in marble by Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716–1799), Italian sculptor sometime between 1750–1770. It is currently in the Getty Museum. Cavaceppi knew what Caracalla looked like from a bust that was kept in the Farnese collection in the 18th century.

94 Lucius Septimius Severus Augustus (145–211), known as 'Severus,' was Roman emperor from 193–211. His eldest son was Caracalla.

95 The Septizodium, or 'Temple of the Seven Suns,' was built by the emperor Septimius Severus in AD 203.

96 The Septizodium was torn down in 1588 and its parts were used to refurbish the Piazza del Popolo, the Column of Marcus Aurelius, and the pope's tomb in Santa Maria Maggiore.

97 Roman Forum. A major plaza at the centre of ancient Rome.

98 Alaric I (370/5–410), King of the Visigoths, sacked Rome in 410, thus initiating the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

The remaining monuments of Severus'[99] successors are even less of an honour to sculpture than the bas-reliefs of that larger of the two triumphal arches erected to the Emperor's memory.

Roman medallions forged after Caracalla's reign, and after that of his successor Macrinus,[100] who survived him for only two years, are greatly inferior to those forged under the first thirty emperors. After Gordianus Pius,[101] they degenerated more noticeably and, under Gallienus,[102] who reigned fifty years after Caracalla, they became nothing more than a vulgar currency. They were tasteless, badly engraved, and poorly fabricated. Since these medallions were currency intended more to teach posterity about the virtues and good actions of the Emperor under whose reign they were forged than to help in commerce, we can believe that the Romans, as protective of their memory as any other people, employed the most capable craftsmen to make them. It is therefore reasonable to judge by the beauty of the medallions the state of engraving under each emperor, and engraving is an art that follows sculpture step-by-step. Observations that can be made by means of the medallions are confirmed by what we know about works of sculpture from that time, which we still have. For example, the medallions of Constantine the Great,[103] who reigned fifty years after Gallienus, were poorly engraved. They were in bad taste. We can also see by the triumphal arch raised in honour of that emperor, still in Rome today, that under his reign and one hundred years before the barbarians sacked Rome, sculpture had become a crasser art than it had been at the start of the First Punic war.[104]

When the Senate and the Roman people wanted to erect this triumphal arch in Constantine's honour, they could find no sculptor in the Empire's capital capable of undertaking the work. Despite Roman respect for Trajan's mem-

---

99 Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander (208–235), Roman emperor. His own assassination is thought to have motivated the assassinations of his successors.

100 Marcus Opellius Severus Macrinus Augustus (ca. 165–218), Roman emperor. He was responsible for ordering the murder of Caracalla.

101 There were three Roman emperors named 'Gordian': Marcus Antonius Gordianus Sempronianus Romanus Africanus (ca. 159–238), his son Marcus Antonius Gordianus Sempronianus Romanus Africanus Augustus (ca. 192–238), both of whom ruled for just one month in 238, and Marcus Antonius Gordianus Pius Augustus (225–244). Du Bos likely refers to Gordian Pius, or Gordian III. It is noteworthy that, at the time of writing the *Reflections*, Du Bos had given up his earlier, heavily criticized, hypothesis that there were in fact four Gordians, published in his *L'Histoire des quatre Gordiens provée et illustrée par des médailles* [History of the Four Gordians, proven and illustrated by medallions] (1695).

102 Caesar Publius Licinius Egnatius Gallienus Augustus (ca. 218–268), Roman emperor.

103 Flavius Valerius Aurellius Constantinus Augustus, also known as Constantine I or Constantine the Great (ca. 272–337), Roman emperor.

104 The First Punic War took place from 265 to 241 BC between ancient Carthage and the Roman Republic.

ory,[105] they stripped the arch they had previously erected to him of its ornaments and employed them in making the arch erected to Constantine. The Roman triumphal arches were not, as ours are, monuments intended to please, neither were their ornaments arbitrary embellishments directed only by the architect's ideas. Since we do not have real triumphs, and since after our victories we do not drive the victor around in a chariot led by captives, modern sculptors can help themselves to trophies and arms invented at their pleasure in order to decorate allegorical arches. The ornaments of one of our triumphal arches can be suitable for any other arch. But since the Romans' triumphal arches were created for the eternal commemoration of a real triumph, the ornaments taken from the spoils of a triumph, appropriate for decorating the arch being created and for perpetuating a memory, could not be used to embellish an arch erected in the memory of another triumph, especially if the victory was gained over a different people. Every nation has its particular arms and uniforms particularly well known in Rome. Everyone can distinguish Dacians,[106] Parthians,[107] and Germans, as easily as the French and the Spanish who, one hundred years ago, each wore their own particular style. Ancient triumphal arches are thus historical monuments, and they demand historical truth which cannot fall short of protocol.[108]

Nevertheless, Constantine's arch was decorated with Parthian captives, as well as trophies made up of their arms and their spoils, ornaments which had been taken from Trajan's arch. Trajan had taken these spoils from the Parthians, yet Constantine had nothing to do with that country. They decorated the arch with bas-reliefs recognizable to everyone, and so everyone recognized Trajan's head. We need not go so far as to say they sacrificed Trajan's monument to erect the Arch of Constantine. Since it could never be entirely composed of scavenged pieces, a sculptor of that time was required to make several bas-reliefs to fill in the gaps. Such are the bas-reliefs that can be seen on the first arcade: they are divinities placed in front of the arch, posed on the moldings in the centre of the two little arcades, just like the broken bas-reliefs set on the keystones of the arcades. In approaching the arch, all the visible sculpture is greatly inferior to good Gothic sculpture, even though, according to what peo-

105 Caesar Nerva Traianus Augustus (53–117), Roman emperor and so-called 'best ruler' (*optimus princeps*). Trajan was considered by Machiavelli to be one of the 'five good emperors.'

106 Dacians were ancient inhabitants of Dacia, near the Carpathian Mountains. Today the area includes Romania, Moldova, as well as parts of other Eastern European countries.

107 Parthians are present-day Iranians whose Empire ran from 247 BC–AD 224.

108 'Protocol' here translates 'bienséance,' a word closely linked with *vraisemblance*. See the Introduction for clarification.

ple say, it was in the hands of the most capable sculptor in the Empire's capital. Finally, when Constantine wanted to decorate his new capital, Constantinople, he knew nothing better than to transport in several of the most beautiful monuments from Rome. Meanwhile, since sculpture depends on human causes more than painting and poetry, and since physical causes do not have the same dominion over sculpture as they have over the other two arts, sculpture falls into decline more slowly than they do, and even more slowly than the art of eloquence. From what Petronius said to us about painting, we see that this art was already degenerating in the time of Emperor Nero.

With regard to poetry, Lucan was Virgil's successor, and there was already some decline between the *Aeneid* and the *Pharsalia*. After Lucan appeared Statius,[109] whose poems were reputed to be much inferior to Lucan's. Statius, who lived under the reign of Domitian,[110] left not a single successor. Nor did Horace in the genre of lyric poetry. Juvenal kept satire alive under Hadrian's empire,[111] but his poems can be regarded as the last gasp of the Roman muses. Ausonius[112] and Claudian,[113] who wanted to bring Latin poetry back to life, produced only a faint phantom. Their verses had neither the metre nor power of those made under Augustus' reign. Tacitus, who wrote under Trajan's rule, was the last Roman historian. He was the last not to have a successor, save for Trogus Pompeius, the abridger.[114] Although scholars are uncertain of when Quintus Curtius [*Justin*] wrote his history of Alexander, and some believe him to have been a writer after Tacitus, it seems decisive to me from a passage in his work that this author composed during Claudius' reign and, consequently, that he was writing about eighty years before Tacitus. Quintus Curtius spoke about the unfortunate events that followed Alexander's death, when the Macedonians chose several leaders instead of just one: they thought it would take a little time for Rome to perish, due to the project of restoring the Republic [*Quint.-Curt.* Bk. 10. Sect. 9].[115] But we can recognize in his marvellous expla-

109 Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 45–ca. 96), Roman poet.

110 Titus Flavius Caesar Domitianus Augustus (51–96), Roman emperor.

111 Publius Aelius Hadrianus Augustus (76–138), Roman emperor.

112 Decimus Magnus Ausonius (ca. 310–ca. 395), Roman poet and rhetorician.

113 Claudius Claudianus (ca. 370–ca. 404), Latin poet.

114 Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus (fl. 1st century BC), Gallo-Roman historian. He wrote a massive, forty-four volume *Philippic Histories and the Origin of the Whole World and the Places of the Earth*, which no longer survives but is epitomized by Marcus Junianus Justinus Frontinus (2nd century AD), known as Justin, a Roman historian. He was the author of *Liber Historiarum Philippicarum*, or *Philippic Histories*, which chronicled the kings of Macedonia.

115 Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* 6–10. Quintus Curtius Rufus (possibly 1st century AD), Roman historian. A portion of his *All the Books that Survive of the Histories of Alexan-*

nation of this event all the key tumultuous conditions that happened in Rome: after Caligula's death, the Senate wanted to restore Republican government, and partisans spoke out against the Praetorian Guard, who wanted to have an emperor.[116] Quintus Curtius gave a solid characterization of all the circumstances of Claudius' accession to the throne, which calmed the turmoil. He spoke so clearly about Claudius' family that we cannot hesitate to accept this passage, especially since the narrative does not fit the story of any of Claudius' immediate thirty successors. This passage in Quintus Curtius makes sense only with regard to Claudius' ascension to the Empire, or that of Gordianus Pius.[117]

Sixty years after Augustus, Quintilian was already writing about the causes of decline in Latin eloquence. Writing under Gallienus, Longinus included a chapter on "The Causes of the Decline of Minds" at the end of his treatise *On the Sublime*.[118] Only the art of oratory remained at that time. The orators had been long gone. The decline of arts and letters was already evident. It had already struck those capable of reflecting on the reasons for it. They made this observation a long while before the barbarians would devastate Italy.

Note, again, that arts and letters began to decline under the greatest emperors, who themselves cultivated the arts. Most emperors prided themselves on being orators, and several of them aspired to being poets. Nero, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius,[119] and Alexander Severus knew how to paint. Can we believe that the arts were neglected under their reigns? Finally, in the four centuries that passed between Julius Caesar and the barbarian invasion, there were many successive, tranquil reigns that can be regarded as the real and historical golden age. Nerva,[120] Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius,[121] and Marcus Aurelius, who

---

der the Great of Macedon survives. Mysteries about Curtius' identity remain, and scholars today continue to investigate. See Elizabeth Baynham, *Alexander the Great: The unique history of Quintus Curtius* (Ann Arbor: 1998).

116 Caligula, whose Latin name is Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (12–41), Roman emperor. Caligula was murdered by the Praetorian Guard upon his threat to leave Rome for Alexandria, where he hoped to be worshipped as a god. After his death, the Senate attempted to restore the republic, but were thwarted by the military's desire to remain an imperial monarchy. His biography is given in Tacitus, *Annals* 6 and Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*.

117 I.e., Gordian III.

118 For background on this work and its influence on 17th and 18th century aesthetics, see the Introduction.

119 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus (121–180), Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher. He wrote the *Meditations*.

120 Marcus Cocceius Nerva Caesar Augustus (30–98), Roman emperor.

121 Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius (86–161), Roman emperor.

immediately succeeded one another and made the succession of the Empire peaceful by son following father, were at the same time great and good emperors.[122] Their continuous reigns amounted to an era of nearly one hundred years.

True, many emperors were tyrants, and civil wars, by means of which a great many emperors obtained or lost the empire, were all too frequent. But the bad attitudes of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus,[123] Caracalla, and Maximinus[124] rarely affected men of letters, and even less so artists. Lucan, the only distinguished man of letters who was put to death during this period, was condemned for being a conspirator, not a poet.[125] Did Lucan's death discourage those with a genius for poetry from writing? Statius, Juvenal, Martial, and many others who saw him die did not give up writing. The terrible attitudes of the emperors were directed only towards great statesmen. Even the cruelest of them desired to be on good terms with people, leading them to ingratiate themselves with the populace by entertaining them with all sorts of festivals and spectacles. This ambition led them to support the advancement of arts and letters.

With regard to the civil wars of which we just spoke, most of them took place outside of Italy, and they came to an end in two campaigns. For no more than forty of the three hundred years between Augustus and Gratian did they cause trouble. The civil war between Otho and Vitellius,[126] and that of Vitellius against Vespasian[127] which, taken together, lasted no more than nine months, were certainly incapable of undermining the fine arts and letters as much as

122 These were known as the 'Five Good Emperors.'

123 Lucius Aurelius Commodus (161–192), Roman emperor and son of Marcus Aurelius.

124 Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus Augustus (ca. 173–238), Roman emperor known as Maximinus Thrax 'the Tracian'. Maximinus met a gruesome death at the hands of his own soldiers who, angry from suffering from famine and disease after Rome was sieged, cut the heads off Maximinus, his son and his chief advisors and stuck them on poles.

125 After enjoying a good friendship with the emperor Nero, the two men had a falling out and Lucan began writing anti-Nero poetry. Consequently, some of his writings were banned from the Empire. But Nero was ultimately killed for his part in a political conspiracy led by Gaius Calpurnius Piso (d. AD 65), Roman senator, against Nero, and Lucan was forced to kill himself.

126 Marcus Otho Caesar Augustus (32–69), Roman emperor, and the second of four in the Year of the Four Emperors in 69. His successor was Aulus Vitellius Germanicus Augustus (15–69), Roman emperor. In March 69, Vitellius was commander when the legions located on the Rhine river began to advance on Italy. They took Otho's army by surprise, and Otho was forced to admit defeat. The morning after the defeat, Otho committed suicide, possibly to try to avoid civil war.

127 Titus Flavius Vespasianus (9–79), Roman emperor and fourth of the Four Emperors.

the civil wars of the Great Pompey and his sons against Caesar, or as much as the civil war in Modena, or other civil wars led by Augustus against Caesar's murderers and Mark Antony. But the civil wars in which Caesar and Augustus partook did not stop the progress of arts and letters. Domitian's death was the work of conspiracy among his own men; the day after his death, Nerva already reigned in peace. Circumstances were similar in the deaths of both Commodus[128] and Pertinax,[129] the first of the emperors killed and deposed after Domitian. Severus deposed Didius Julianus[130] without a fight, and the war he waged in the east against Pescennius Niger,[131] and later in Gaul against Clodius Albinus,[132] did not prevent Roman artists and scholars from working, any more than the sudden revolutions that took place in Asia, which put Macrinus[133] in Caracalla's place, and Heliogabalus[134] in Macrinus'. True, tumultuous revolutions sometimes occurred in Rome, but they lasted just a day or two, without being followed by circumstances that can slow the progress of arts and sciences.

---

128 Commodus considered himself god-like and expected to be treated as such. He was assassinated; after a failed attempt at poisoning, Commodus was strangled to death by his own wrestling partner.

129 Publius Helvius Pertinax Augustus (126–193), Roman emperor during the Year of the Five Emperors. Thought to have led the conspiracy which brought about Commodus' assassination, Pertinax was killed by one of his soldiers after between two and three hundred of them stormed his palace complaining about their pay.

130 Marcus Didius Severus Julianus Augustus (133/7–193), Roman emperor. After Pertinax's assassination, Julianus rose to power by purchasing his place as emperor, but the civil war that was prompted by Pertinax's death led to his downfall. He was murdered by his successor, Septimius Severus, after a short three-month reign.

131 Gaius Pescennius Niger Augustus (135/140–194), Roman emperor during the Year of the Five Emperors. Niger ascended to power but not without difficulty. Septimius Severus sought to take Rome while Niger worked throughout the Asiatic provinces of the Empire to secure support. Locating his power in Byzantium, Niger was faced with several battles, and in the last of them was killed on Severus' orders.

132 Decimus Clodius Septimius Albinus Augustus (ca. 150–197), Roman emperor. After proclaiming himself emperor during this precarious period of political upheaval, Albinus faced Septimius Severus' army at the battle of Lugdunum. Albinus either committed suicide or was killed on Severus' orders.

133 Macrinus ordered the murder of his predecessor Caracalla. Macrinus was executed while fleeing the Battle of Antioch, after his successor's family members caused him great trouble while attempting to unseat him.

134 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus (203–222), Roman emperor also known as either Heliogabalus or Elagabalus after his death. His grandmother plotted his assassination when he was only eighteen. Heliogabalus fell out of favour with the Senate and Praetorian Guard due to his hyper-sexualized behaviour and his failure to respect Roman religion.

Nero was deposed in Rome without putting up a fight. The murder of Galba[135] and Otho's ascension to power took but a morning, and the upheaval cost the lives of just one hundred people. People watched combat between Vespasian's and Vitellius' troops that took place in Rome for a single day,[136] without taking any more interest than they commonly took in gladiatorial combats. Maximinus was deposed, and the African Gordians put in his place without causing Rome any more exertion than is caused by the execution of some individual criminal.[137] When the Gordians were killed in Africa, Pupienus and Balbinus succeeded them without commotion,[138] and the war that began between the populace and the Praetorian Guard prompted by the assassination of the two emperors began and ended in just two days, and Gordianus Pius was put in their place. Other revolutions were quick, and we have already said that they took place outside of Rome. In sum, Roman civil wars under the first fifty emperors were wars fought between armies to contest the advantage a leader could provide to the Empire. The two parties managed the provinces with as much care during these wars as do our Christian princes in the frequent wars that take them to countries they hope to conquer and rule. There was certainly disorder, but it was not such as to enslave the arts and sciences. No war impeded their progress. They are cited only as one of the causes of their decline: they put individual members of the state in danger, those whom they want to enslave who were previously citizens, or whom they want to deprive of their personal property.

---

135 Servius Sulpicius Galba Caesar Augustus (AD 3–69), Roman emperor during the Year of the Four Emperors. He seized the emperorship immediately following Nero's death, and was known as a cruel leader. Galba was murdered by Otho in part because Otho disagreed with Galba's choice for his successor.

136 Titus Flavius Vespasianus Augustus (AD 9–79), Roman emperor. He succeeded Vitellius by force. Leading the armies in the eastern part of the Empire, Vespasian challenged Vitellius' title. Vespasian and his troops entered Rome and beheaded Vitellius.

137 The disinterest among the Romans is explained because these actions took place in the province of Africa. That province saw a major revolt among landowners, who murdered the political leadership and named the two Gordians, Gordian I and II, to be co-emperors. This news did not go over well in Rome, and in Africa the Gordians had their own enemies. Gordian I was killed by invading militia, and his son, Gordian II, hanged himself in response.

138 Upon hearing of the deaths of the Gordians, two new emperors were named: Marcus Clodius Pupienus Maximus (165/70–238) and Decimus Caelius Calvinus Balbinus (178–238). They ruled for just three precarious months in 238, not least because of a lack of trust between them. The Praetorian Guard tired of their in-fighting and assassinated them at the same time. AD 238 is known as the Year of the Six Emperors.

The same is true for the wars of the Persians against the Greeks, and the Northern barbarians against the Roman Empire. The same is also true for the wars between Turks and Christians, where the entire people ran greater risks than the soldiers in the common course of war. Similar wars annihilated arts and sciences in the countries they destroyed. But ordinary wars, where the populace faces no more risk than a change of leadership and the succession of one Christian leader after another, do not annihilate arts and sciences, unless they happen to be in an unfortunate city that has been invaded and ransacked. The fear spread by these wars could at most slow their progress for a few years, but it seems to me that this is not the case. By what miracle I do not know, arts and sciences never fare better than in the midst of war. Greece achieved so much in the era of Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Science and fine arts made tremendous progress during the period of civil wars afflicting the Roman Empire under Caesar and Augustus. From 1494 until 1529, Italy was almost always under threat from armies composed mainly of foreign soldiers. The Spanish low countries were attacked by France and Holland when the School of Antwerp was in full flourish. Is it not during war that arts and letters make similar great progress in France?

When we seriously reflect, we find that during the three centuries following Caesar's murder, the Roman Empire experienced no wars so terrible as to be able to make fine arts and letters fall into decline. It was only under Gallienus that the barbarians began to set up permanent settlements on the Empire's soil, and that the tyrants campaigned in the provinces. Those governors who became sovereigns could have occasioned the devastation of some lands by the wars they fought among themselves in provinces that lacked protection on their frontiers, having been governed for a long time by the same leader. But these devastations were not capable of making arts and letters fall into decline when they did. The capital of the state in an enduring government is always home to the arts. All good craftsmen in the Roman Empire should have gathered in Rome. No devastations in the city of Rome can be cited as one of the causes of the annihilation of arts and letters. Until its capture by Alaric, which happened only four hundred and fifty years after Caesar's death, the city of Rome remained the capital of a great Empire, where splendid buildings were erected every day. The strife of the Praetorian Guard did not prevent there being great painters, sculptors, orators, and poets, since they did not prevent there being an entire population of mediocre artists. When the arts are sufficiently cultivated to allow a large number of mediocre artists, it also can produce excellent ones, if genius is not lacking in the craftsmen.

Even today, Rome is filled with tombs and statues clearly recognizable by their inscriptions, or by the hairstyles of women, to have been made between

the reign of Trajan and that of Constantine. Since Romans changed their hairstyles as often as the French, we can easily come to know under which emperor they were made from the hairstyles found on Roman monuments, and this is because we know what period of time they were in circulation by the medallions of the emperors' wives and family members. With the help of a study of fashion in France over the last three hundred years, such as the one Gaignières has produced,[139] we can determine when a portrait of a French woman in urban dress was made.

According to several 4th-century authors, there were more statues in Rome than living men. The most beautiful Greek statues, whose remains are so precious to us, were also as numerous. Since Caracalla, these statues were incapable of producing great sculptors. Their *virtu* lasted until the time of Pope Julius II. Under Constantine, they continued to build sumptuous buildings in Rome, and consequently to employ sculptors. Perhaps, there were never more craftsmen in Rome than at the time when there were no good ones. How many superb buildings were raised by Severus, Caracalla, Alexander Severus, and Gordianus Pius? One cannot look at the ruins of Caracalla's baths without being surprised by the immensity of that building.[140] Augustus did not build anything so vast. There was never a building more extravagant, more weighted with ornamentation and inlaying, nor more capable of honouring a sovereign by its sheer mass, than Diocletian's baths, one of Gallienus' successors.[141] Today, one room of the building is the Carthusian Church of Rome. One of the porter's residences houses another church, that of the Feuillants of St. Bernard at Terme.[142]

Let us add another point to these considerations. Most Roman sculptors did their apprenticeship while they were slaves. It is possible to believe that the merchants, whose profession was to deal in slaves, examined with care and insight whether, among the children they had for sale, there could be found some who were suited to becoming skilled sculptors. It is also possible to imag-

139 François Roger de Gaignières (1642–1715), French historian and collector. See Elizabeth A.R. Brown, *The Oxford Collection of the Drawings of Roger de Gaignières and the Royal Tombs of Saint Denis* [The Transactions of the American Philosophical Society] 78.5 (Philadelphia: 1988).

140 Built under the leadership of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, enormous hot baths, or *thermae*, were built in Rome between 212 and 216. Made of lime and marble, they covered 100,000 m^2 and used more than 8,000,000 litres of water.

141 The Baths of Diocletian, which were built between 298 and 306, were the largest baths built in the Empire. They covered 130,000 m^2 and housed both a *frigidarium* (a cold room with a cold bath) and a *caldarium* (a room for the hot baths).

142 San Bernardo alle Terme was built at the end of the 16th century, and it housed the Cistercian order of friars of St. Bernard known as the Feuillants.

ine the care with which they bestowed a suitable education on those they judged capable of excelling in sculpture, one that would perfect their talent. A slave, if he was a good craftsman, would thereby be a treasure for his owner, whether he wanted to sell the person or the slave's work. But the ways one must work to get a young slave to apply himself to work are completely different from those used on free men. What could motivate a slave beyond hope for his freedom! Masterpieces whose remains we admire were still in public places, and so we can blame human causes only for the crassness of artists who came onto the scene after the sack of Rome by Alaric.

Why were arts and letters not maintained at the same height in Greece as they were under Alexander's father and the first successors of that conquerer? Why did they become so *retrograde* that the craftsmen became as crass as they were two centuries before Philip, in the same way as under Constantine? Arts and letters obviously declined in Greece from the time of Perseus, King of Macedonia, who was defeated and taken prisoner by Aemilius Paullus.[143] Even painting did not sustain itself for long. It degenerated beginning from the time of Alexander's successors. *Floruit autem circa Philippum et usque ad successores Alexandri praecipue pictura* [Quint. *Inst.* Bk. II. Ch. X].[144] Lucan can pass as the only poet during that period, although he only wrote in prose. Plutarch and Dio,[145] who is close to Plutarch in time, but not in merit, were reputed to be the best authors writing when Greece became a province of the Roman Empire. The writings of these two Greeks should be regarded with veneration. They wrote judicious works of history that meaningfully convey to us many important and interesting facts, which we would not have but for their reports. Above everything else from Greek and Roman antiquity, Plutarch's works are most valuable for their detailed reports, and for all the facts they teach us. We could mention something about Dio and Herodian,[146] who wrote under the reign of Alexander Severus and Gordianus Pius. But with regard either to the art of writing powerfully and with dignity, or to the art of depicting great events, these historians are not comparable to Thucydides or Herodotus. We have spoken about the use that can be made of medallions for understanding the state of the arts at the time they were forged. But in Greek-speaking countries of

143 Perseus (ca. 212–166 BC) was the last king of the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia. He was defeated by Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus (ca. 229–160 BC), Roman general, in the Third Macedonian War.

144 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.10: "Painting flourished most, however, about the reign of Philip and under the successors of Alexander."

145 Cassius Dio (155–235), Roman politician, historian, author of *Roman History*.

146 Herodian (ca. 170–ca. 240), Greek historian. His eight-volume work is entitled *Roman History*.

the Roman Empire, medallions forged in great numbers in honour of, and with the head of, emperors were poorly engraved, in comparison to those forged in Rome at the same time under the Senate's authority, whose mark they bore. For example, medallions depicting Severus forged in Corfu, which were discovered in a treasure trove about sixty years ago on that island, are very mundane, and not comparable to the Latin medallions depicting that emperor made in Rome. Yet those medallions from Corfu are the best that the Greeks could do. The general rule admits no exception.

From the death of Alexander until their subjugation by the Romans, the Greeks experienced no wars capable of making arts and letters be forgotten for entire centuries. The upheaval caused by the uprising of the Gauls in Greece, about a hundred years after Alexander's death, did not last for long. But supposing that arts and letters suffered on account of the wars undertaken by Alexander's successors, and by those between the Romans and the Macedonian kings, or even the Aetolians,[147] arts and letters ought to have returned to perfection as soon as Greece's peace was restored permanently under Roman rule. The work of artists was not interrupted except during the Mithridatic wars,[148] and by Roman civil wars which gave, at different times, four or five years of unrest in different provinces. Later, arts and letters ought to have revived under Augustus' reign, which saw them flourish in Rome. After the Battle of Actium, Greece enjoyed three centuries of peaceful days. Under the majority of Roman emperors, Greece's submission to the Empire was, more than anything, a financial arrangement that created public calm, rather than a burden to individual citizens and a prejudice to society. Romans did not put troops on the ground in Greece, as they did in other provinces. Most cities continued to be governed by their ancient laws and, generally speaking, of all foreign people subjected to Roman domination, none was less affected [than the Greeks]. It was more a rudder than a yoke. The wars undertaken by the Athenians, Thebans, and Lacedaemonians,[149] those between Philip and other Greek provinces, were more fateful for their length and outcomes than those of Alexander, or of his successors, including the Romans who were in Greece. But these early wars did not prevent arts and sciences from making progress, which give such great honour to the human spirit.

147 Aetolia is a region in Greece on the north coast of the Gulf of Corinth. The Aetolian War took place between 191–189 BC, in which the Aetolians were defeated.

148 There were three Mithridatic wars between Rome and the Kingdom of Pontus: 88–84 BC, 83–81 BC, and 75–63 BC. The Romans were eventually victorious.

149 From antiquity until the 19th century, Lacedaemonia was the name of what is now known as Sparta.

You may reply to me: Everything you have just alleged proves nothing. Under the Antonines and their successors,[150] the Greeks never had genius such as they had had in Phidias[151] and Praxiteles,[152] but their artists degenerated because the Romans transported all the masterworks of the great artists to Rome. They deprived Greece of objects most likely to shape the tastes and encourage the emulation of young craftsmen. The Second Punic War was taking place when Marcellus brought the Porticoes of Syracuse as spoils to Rome [Livius, *hist.* bk. 25],[153] which gave the citizens of Rome a taste for the arts that would soon become widespread throughout the city, and which was, in what followed, the cause of so much depravity. Even those who were ignorant of the value of statues, vases, and other curiosities, seized the opportunity to bring them to Rome, where they saw they had so much value. It is easy to believe that Mummius, who wanted to enrich Rome with the spoils of Corinth, knew nothing of their value by the ridiculous treatment he gave to the ship captains who brought them [Vell. Patere. Bk. 2].[154] There has never been a greater loss than what was in this cache, composed of masterworks by exceptional artists, who contribute as much as the greatest leaders do to making their eras respected by other eras. In recommending care of this precious cargo to those to whom he entrusted it, Mummius nonetheless very seriously threatened that, were the statues, paintings, and other things in their possession to be lost, the sailors would have to commission new ones at their own expense. But, getting back to the subject, all Romans soon emerged from their ignorance, and in short time not even a

150 The Nerva-Antonine dynasty, a series of seven emperors reigning from AD 96 to 192.

151 Phidias (ca. 480–430 BC), Greek sculptor, painter and architect. He is widely considered to be the greatest Greek sculptor and is famous for his statue of Zeus at Olympia. He is also famous for his creation of the Parthenon Marbles, also known as the 'Elgin Marbles'.

152 Praxiteles (fl. 375–340 BC), Greek sculptor.

153 Livy, *History of Rome* 27.16: "After the carnage followed the sack of the city. It is said that 30,000 slaves were captured together with an enormous quantity of silver plate and bullion, 83 pounds' weight of gold and a collection of statues and pictures almost equal to that which had adorned Syracuse. Fabius, however, showed a nobler spirit than Marcellus had exhibited in Sicily; he kept his hands off that kind of spoil." Marcus Claudius Marcellus (ca. 268–208 BC), Roman military leader. He led a military battle at Syracuse, killing thousands of Roman deserters and laying siege to the city. The city was plundered, and much of its art and architecture was removed and brought to Rome.

154 Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome* 1.13: "Mummius was so uncultivated that when, after the capture of Corinth, he was contracting for the transportation to Italy of pictures and statues by the hands of the greatest artists, he gave instructions that the contractors should be warned that, if they lost them, they would have to replace them by new ones." Lucius Mummius (2nd century BC), Roman statesman and general. He destroyed the ancient city of Corinth, which resulted in all of Greece falling under Roman rule. He was well known for being indifferent to the value of art and other objects he plundered from the fallen city.

simple soldier would break a precious vase while ransacking enemies' cities. Sulla's army brought Asia to Rome; or, to be more precise, the army made Greek taste common.[155] *Ibi primum insuevit exercitus populi Romani amare, potare, signaque, tabulas pictas, vasa caelata mirari, ea privatum ac publice rapere, delubra spoliare, sacra profanaque omnia polluere* [Sallust. *de Bell. Catalin.*].[156]

From the time of the Republic, there had been more than one Verres,[157] more than one Roman, who exercised their rights of conquest over subjugated provinces. Cicero's description of this excess can be found in his fourth speech against that marauder. Far from ending in Rome under the Republican government, this licentiousness became wild thievery under several emperors. We know with just how much impudence Caligula pillaged the provinces. Nero sent two *experts*, Carinas and Acratus, to Greece and to Asia for the sole purpose of bringing back beautiful, surviving pieces of sculpture for decorating his new buildings. Those poor Greeks, as Juvenal said, were stripped of their household gods.[158] They did not leave them even the least valuable deity:

> *Ipsi deinde lares, si quod spectabile signum,*
> *Si quis in edicula Deus unicus.*
> [Juv. *Sat.* 8][159]

All these facts are true, but there are still so many beautiful pieces of sculpture remaining in Greece and Asia that artists did not lack for models. There are still plenty of objects inviting their emulation. The beautiful statues found in Greece over the past two or three centuries prove that the Roman emperors and their officers did not appropriate them all. The *Ganymede* that can be seen in the Library of San Marco in Venice was discovered in Greece three hundred

155 Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (ca. 138–78 BC), Roman general and statesman. Sulla led the famous Battle of Orchomenus, and his victory resulted in Rome's control over Asia Minor.

156 Sallust, *The War with Cataline* 11: "There it was that an army of Roman people first became accustomed to indulge in women and wine; to admire statues, paintings, and chased vessels; to steal them from private houses and public places; to pillage shrines, and to desecrate everything, both sacred and profane." Gaius Sallustius Crispus (86–35 BC), Roman historian and politician.

157 Gaius Verres (ca. 120–43 BC), Roman magistrate and praetor of Sicily. He was prosecuted for abuses of authority by Cicero, and as a result was required to go into exile. See Cicero's *Verrine Orations*, which contain his speeches against Verres.

158 Called *penates*, these were household deities used in religious rituals.

159 Juvenal, *Satire* 8.110–111: "But these will be kidnapped … along with the household gods themselves."

years ago.[160] The *Andromeda*,[161] which is at the home of the Duke of Modena, was found in Athens when that city was captured by the Venetians during the war that ended with the Treaty of Karlowitz.[162] The stories of modern travellers are filled with descriptions of statues and bas-reliefs that can still be seen in Greece and Asia Minor. Did the Romans take the bas-reliefs from Minerva's temple in Athens? Speaking of letters, did they steal all copies of Homer, Sophocles, and other writers of the good times? No, but those happy days are over. Greek industry degenerated into artifice, and their wisdom into guile. Greek people became coarse, but with a talent for harming one another. During the final six centuries of Constantinople's Empire, they became as unskilled as they had been during the time of King Amyntas of Macedonia, especially in the arts.[163] True, the propitious Greek era lasted longer than the age of Augustus or the era of Leo X. The art of letters endured for a long time after the fall of the fine arts because, generally speaking, Greeks of every age are born with greater spirit than other people. It seems that nature has a power in Greece that it finds in no other countries, making food more substantial and poisons more noxious. Greeks have pushed virtue and vice further than other people.

The city of Antwerp was, for a time, the Athens of countries this side of the Alps. But when Rubens began to put together his famous school, human causes did nothing out of the ordinary to favour the arts. If the flourishing state of cities and kingdoms are the only reason for the perfection of fine arts, painting in Antwerp ought to have been in its splendour for sixty years longer. When Rubens appeared on the scene, Antwerp had already lost half of its splendour because the newly established Republic of Holland had already drawn away half of Antwerp's commerce. War was taking place right beside the city. Every day, enemies made new attempts on the city, putting the situation of merchants, clergy, and key citizens in danger. Rubens left students such as Jordaens[164] and Van Dyck to honour his reputation, but his students died with-

160 Du Bos may be referring to a 5th century white marble statue of Ganymede, originally from Carthage (in modern day Tunisia). In Greek mythology, Ganymede was a beautiful divine hero and child who was abducted by Zeus, and often represents *paiderastia*, which is pederasty.

161 Du Bos may be referring to the ancient sculpture that may have served as a model for *Andromeda and the Sea Monster* (1694), which was commissioned to be made by Francesco II d'Este (1660–1694), Duke of Modena. Domenico Guidi (1625–1701), Italian sculptor, completed the sculpture, but not before the Duke's early death.

162 In 1699 at the conclusion of the Austro-Ottoman war, the Treaty of Karlowitz was signed to mark the end of Ottoman rule in Europe.

163 Amyntas I (ca. 540–498 BC), King of Macedonia and its first ruler.

164 Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678), Flemish painter and designer of tapestries.

out disciples to replace them. Rubens' school suffered the same fate as other schools. I mean that it fell apart when everything appeared to be organized to sustain it. At the least, it seems that Quellinus who is regarded as its last painter, is likely to die without students.[165] I have heard of none yet, and it is unlikely he will find any in his current state of retirement.

After everything I have just explained, it is clear that arts and letters arrive at their highest point of splendour by a sudden progress, and that we cannot attribute this to human causes. It also appears that arts and letters decline even when those causes are the final efforts to sustain them.

Third Reflection: That Great Painters Were Always Contemporaries and Compatriots of Great Poets.

Finally, the great artists of a country have nearly always been contemporaries. Not only have the greatest painters of all schools lived at the same time, but they have been contemporaries of the great poets of their country. When the arts have flourished they have also produced great people in all sciences, virtues, and professions. It seems that some unknown spirit of perfection spreads over everyone in a certain country. It seems that this spirit withdraws after having made two or three generations more perfect than the preceding and subsequent generations.

When Greece produced Apelles, it also produced Praxiteles and Lysippos.[166] At that time Greece's greatest poets, greatest orators, and greatest philosophers were living. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, and several others all lived in the same era.[167] What men the Greek generals

165 Jan-Erasmus Quellinus (1634–1715), Flemish painter and draughtsman. Du Bos did not update the fact of Quellinus' death in 1715 in his subsequent editions of the *Réflexions Critiques*.

166 Lysippos (fl. 4th century BC), Greek sculptor. Lysippos was and is considered one of the greatest sculptors of the ancient world. According to Pliny, he produced 1500 bronze sculptures. Roman copies of his works survive but little or nothing of his original bronzes.

167 Socrates (ca. 470–399 BC), Plato (ca. 428–347 BC), Aristotle (384–322 BC), Greek philosophers. Demosthenes (384–322 BC), Greek orator and statesman. Xenophon (ca. 430–354 BC), Greek philosopher, historian, and solider; a student of Socrates. Isocrates (436–338 BC), Greek rhetorician. Aeschylus (ca. 525–ca. 455 BC), Euripides (ca. 480–ca. 406 BC), Sophocles (ca. 497–ca. 405 BC), Aristophanes (ca. 446–386 BC), Menander (ca. 342–ca. 290 BC), major playwrights with enduring reputations. Thucydides (ca. 460–ca. 400 BC), distinguished Greek historian.

of this time were! What great exploits did they not achieve with small armies! What princes were Philip, King of Macedonia, and his son [Alexander the Great]! Collect all of the illustrious people that Greece produced in the centuries from Perseus, King of Macedonia, until the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks. We will not find in those seventeen centuries a swarm of great people, in every profession, as numerous as the one that can be assembled from the era of Plato. All professions degenerated in Greece even, in time, arts and letters. Livy called Philopoemen,[168] one of the generals of the Achaeans during the reign of Perseus, King of Macedonia, 'the last of the Greeks.'

The era of Augustus had the same fate as that of Plato. Among the masterpieces of Roman sculpture, we have nothing more beautiful than the pieces that were made at the time of Augustus. These include the *Bust of Agrippa*,[169] his son-in-law, in the gallery of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the *Cicero* of the Villa Mattei,[170] and the capitals on the columns of the Temple of *Divus Iulius*, which are still standing in the middle of the Campo Vaccino. All European sculptors take them for models when they use Corinthian order of capitals.[171] Under Augustus, Roman medallions began to be beautiful and engraving is an art that follows sculpture, whatever fate befalls it. We can determine the date of many engraved stones on the basis of their subjects and the people that they represent. The most beautiful Roman stones are those that were made at the time of Augustus. An example is Cicero engraved on a piece of agate that belonged to Charles II, King of England.[172] Another example is the stone in the collection of the King [of France] that represents Augustus and Livia.[173] Another is the stone given to the late king by Fesch of

168 Philopoemen (253–183 BC), Greek general and statesman. He transformed the Achaean League, a federation of cities in the Peloponnese, into a major power in Greece. Plutarch, not Livy, records that an anonymous Roman called Philopoemen the last of the Greeks. See, Plutarch, *Life of Philopoemen* 1.

169 This bust of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (63 BC–AD 12), does date from the time of Augustus and is now in the Uffizi.

170 Now known as the Villa Celimontana in Rome. It was built in the 16th century for Cirico Mattei.

171 The Temple of Divus Julius was begun in AD 42, after the Roman Senate deified Caesar. It is in the part of the Roman Forum called, after its use in the Middle Ages, Campo Vaccino (cattle field). A Corinthian capital belongs to the most elaborate of classical architectural orders and is characterised by acanthus leaves and scrolls. The architectural order of the temple is still debated.

172 Possibly the piece (no. 1073) mentioned by Pierre-Jean Mariette, *Sommaire des pierres gravées du cabinet de feu M. Crozat* [Summary of engraved stones from the collection of the late Mr. Crozat] (Paris: 1741), 68.

173 See Pierre-Jean Mariette, *Traité de pierres gravées* [Treatise on engraved stones], vol. 2,

Basel,[174] which represents Apollo playing a lyre on a rock: this is the typical pose of Apollo Actius in the medallions of Augustus. Apollo assumed this new title after Augustus won the battle of Actium. There is another reason to believe that these stones were engraved at the time of Augustus: the name of the engravers can be read in the place where the name of the craftsman is sometimes engraved on this sort of work. Pliny [Plin. *hist*. bk. 37][175] and others inform us that these excellent stone engravers lived at the time of Augustus. We can also mention the relief on an agate in the collection of the Emperor in Vienna, which represents Augustus and Livia, as well as the one of Fr. de Montfaucon [p. 242][176] has depicted in his account of his travels in Italy, which represents Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. Finally, there is the most precious antique jewel, the agate of the Holy Chapel of Paris. The study of this jewel has occupied five of the most illustrious antiquarians. Peiresc, Tristan, Albert Rubens, Le Roi, and Hardouin[177] agree that it was made during the reign of Augustus or one of his two immediate successors.

We can say of Roman architecture what we have said of sculpture. The Theatre of Marcellus, the portico and interior decorations of the Rotunda, the

---

Receuil [sic] *des pierres gravées du cabinet du roy* [Study of engraved stones from the collection of the king] (Paris: 1750), part 2, ill. 52. Livia Drusillia (58 BC–AD 29), wife and advisor of Augustus.

174 Mariette, *Traité de pierres gravées*, vol. 2, 12. Sébastien Fesch (1647–1712), Swiss doctor of law and amateur antiquarian. He wrote an essay "Sur une Medaille du Roy Pylaemenes," in *Recherches curieuses d'antiquité* [Interesting ancient research] (Lyon: 1683), a collection edited by a certain Dr. Spon.

175 Pliny, *Natural History* 37.4.

176 Du Bos refers to *Diarium italicum* (Paris: 1702).

177 Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), French astronomer and antiquarian. He rediscovered the so-called *Grand Camée de France* (Great Cameo of France) in the collection of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and identified it as Roman. It was carved ca. AD 23 and is the largest surviving cameo from the ancient world. The *Grand Camée* came to the attention of the painter Peter Paul Rubens and his antiquarian son, Albert Rubens (1614–1657). Albert Rubens published his father's engraving of the cameo in *De re vestiaria veterum* (1665). An earlier engraving had appeared in Jean-Tristan de Saint-Amant (1595–1656), *Commentaires historiques contenans l'histoire générale des empereurs, imperatrices, caesars, et tyrans de l'empire romain* [Historical commentaries containing the general history of emperors, dictators, caesars, and tyrants of the Roman Empire] (1644). See Robert Wellington, *Antiquarianism and the Visual Histories of Louis XIV: Artifacts for a Future Past* (Farnham: 2015), 183. Du Bos also mentions Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708), French architect recognized as one of the greatest of the 17th century. The Palace of Versailles was one of his commissions. Jacques Le Roy (1633–1719), historian born in Brabant. He was the author of *Achates Tiberianus, Sive Gemma Caesarea, Antiquitate, Argumento, Arte, Historia, Prorsus Incomparabilis* (1683). The Cameo is currently in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Temple of Julius Caesar in the *Campo Vaccino*, the Temple of Jupiter Anxur at Terracina, which we know from an inscription on the marbles of the large wall to be the work of the architect Pollio, and the Temple of Castor and Pollux, constructed at Naples at the expense of one of Augustus's freedmen, are regarded as monuments to Roman magnificence, and of the most credit to Roman architecture.

Everyone knows from school that the greatest Roman poets or, to be more precise, all of the great Roman poets, except two or three, flourished in the era of Augustus. This prince saw, or at least could have seen, Virgil, Horace, Propertius,[178] Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid, Phaedrus,[179] Cornelius Gallus,[180] and several others whose works are lost, but who were as admired in their day as those that we still admire today. Augustus could have seen Lucretius, who died in the Roman year 699, the same day that he saw Virgil put on his *toga virilis*[181] as Donatus noted in his biography of Virgil.[182] Creech [His book was published in Oxford in 1695],[183] the most recent and best commentator on Lucretius, is mistaken in his biography of this author, in saying that he died the same day that Virgil was born. Given my interests, I must correct here this error. Here is what Horace said the of the merits of Fundanius,[184] Pollio, and Varius, three other poets contemporaneous with Augustus:

Arguta meretrice potes Davoque Chremeta
eludente senem comis garrire libellos
unus vivorum, Fundani, Pollio regum
facta canit pede ter percusso; forte epos acer

178 Sextus Propertius (ca. 50–ca. 15 BC), Roman poet. He was a friend of Virgil and four books of his *Elegies* survive.

179 Gaius Julius Phaedrus (fl. 1st century), usually known as Phaedrus, Roman fabulist who translated Aesop's fables from Greek prose into Latin verse.

180 Gaius Cornelius Gallus (ca. 70–26 BC), Roman poet, statesman, and orator. Only nine lines of his poetry survive.

181 Adult attire.

182 Aelius Donatus (fl. mid-4th century BC), Roman grammarian and rhetorician. His works include a biography of Virgil.

183 Thomas Creech (1659–1700), English classicist, translator, and teacher. Du Bos apparently refers to Creech's *T. Lucretius Carus. The Epicurian Philosopher, His Six Books* De Natura Rerum *Done into English Verse with Notes* (Oxford: 1683). This work includes a "Life of Lucretius." Note that Du Bos has the wrong publication date.

184 Gaius Fundanius (fl. 1st century AD), Roman poet. He is mentioned in Horace, *Satires* 1.10.40–42.

ut nemo Varius ducit, molle atque facetum
Vergilio adnuerunt gaudentes rure Camenae.
[Horace, *Sat.* I, 10, v. 40][185]

Putting these writings in the same class as Virgil is a strong vote of confidence for these poets, particularly from a writer as judicious as Horace.

Most of the poets I have mentioned could have seen Cicero, Hortensius,[186] and the other most famous Roman orators. They saw Julius Caesar, a citizen as noted for his eloquence as for his many civic virtues, and a captain famous for his exploits and for his knowledge of the art of war. Livy, the most eminent Roman historian, Sallust,[187] an historian that Paterculus and Quintilian [Vell. Pat. Bk. 2. Quint. *Instit*. bk. 10. Ch. 2][188] dared to compare to Thucydides, lived at the time of Augustus. They were contemporaries of Vitruvius,[189] the most illustrious Roman architect. Augustus had already been born when Aesopus and Roscius, the most famous actors mentioned by ancient Romans, died. What men were Cato Uticensis,[190] Brutus,[191] and most of the other murderers of Caesar! What a man must Agrippa have been to have accumulated such a vast fortune under a prince who judged merit as well as Augustus. As Seneca the Elder wrote, *Quidquid Romana facundia habet quod insolenti Graeciae aut opponat aut praeferat circa Ciceronem effloruit; omnia ingenia quae lucem studiis nostris adtulerunt tunc nata sunt. In deterius deinde cotidie data res est* [M. Ann. Senec. *Controv*. Bk. 1].[192]

185 Horace, *Satires* 1.10.40–45: "You alone of living poets, Fundanius, can charm us with the chit-chat of comedies, where the artful mistress and Davus fool old Chremes In measure of triple beat Pollio sings of kings' exploits. Surpassing all in spirit, Varius moulds the valorous epic. To Virgil the Muses rejoicing in rural life have granted simplicity and charm."

186 Quintus Hortensius Hortalus (114–50 BC), Roman statesman and orator. He was Consul in 69 BC.

187 Gaius Sallustius Crispus, known in English as Sallust (86–ca. 35 BC), Roman historian and statesman.

188 Velleius Paterculus, 2.36.

189 *De Architectura* [On Architecture] is the only surviving ancient treatise on architecture.

190 Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis (95–46 BC), known as Cato the Younger, Roman statesman and Stoic. He was involved in the assassination of Julius Caesar.

191 Marcus Junius Brutus (85–42 BC), Roman statesman. He played a leading role in the assassination of Julius Caesar. His story is immortalized in literature, most famously by William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, which popularized the questionable last words from Caesar to Brutus, "Et tu, Brute?" ("Brutus, you too?").

192 Seneca the Elder, *Declamations* 1.6–7: "Everything that Roman oratory has to set alongside

The pontificates of Julius II, Leo X, and Clement VII,[193] so productive of great painters, also produced the best architects and the greatest sculptors of which Italy can boast. At the same time, excellent engravers appeared, in all of the genres that this art encompasses. The newborn art of printmaking was perfected in their hands and left its cradle, just as the art of painting was perfected in the pictures of Raphael. Everyone knows the value of Ariosto[194] and Tasso,[195] who lived in the same general period. Fracastoro,[196] Sannazaro,[197] and Vida were then writing the best Latin verse since Roman literature had put out new shoots. What men, each of his kind, were Leo X, Paul III,[198] the Cardinals Bembo[199] and Sadoleto,[200] Andrea Doria, the Marquis of Pescara, Filippo Strozzi,[201] Cosimo de' Medici, epitommized 'the Great', Machiavelli, and Guicciardini,[202] the historian. But, to the extent that the arts have declined in Italy, the places and professions of these great people have ceased to be occupied and to be undertaken by persons of such great merit.

The greatest French sculptors, Sarasin, the Anguier brothers, Le Hongre, Les Marsy, Girardon, Desjardins, Coyzevox, Le Gros, Théodon, Puget,[203] and sev-

---

or even above the haughty Greeks reached its peak in Cicero's day: all the geniuses who have brought brilliance to our subject were born then. Since, things have got daily worse."

193 Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici (1478–1534), reigned as Pope from 1523–1534.

194 Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), Italian poet, best known as the author of *Orlando Furioso*.

195 Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), Italian poet, best known as the author of *Gerusalemme liberata*.

196 Girolamo Fracastoro (ca. 1476–1553), Italian poet and polymath. He is the author of the poem *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* [Syphilis or The French Disease], in which the shepherd Syphilis insults Apollo and is punished with the disease that now bears his name.

197 Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530), Italian poet and epigrammist, best known for his influential pastoral prosimetrum, *Arcadia*: Sincero, the poet's persona, is disappointed in love and pursues an idyllic life among shepherds. Sannazaro introduced the Arcadian theme into European literature.

198 Alessandro Farnese (1468–1549), pope from 1534 until his death.

199 Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), Italian poet, literary theorist, and historian.

200 Jacopo Sadoleto (1477–1547), Italian cardinal and leader of the counter-reformation.

201 A trio of Renaissance soldiers: Andrea Doria (1468–1560), Italian soldier and admiral; Fernando Francesco d'Ávalos (1489–1525), Spanish-Italian soldier; Filippo Strozzi the Younger (1489–1538), Italian soldier and banker.

202 Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), Italian historian and statesman. He was the author of *The History of Italy* (1537–1540).

203 Jacques Sarazin or Sarrazin (ca. 1588–1660), French sculptor and painter; François (ca. 1604–1669) and his brother Michel Anguier (1612–1686), French sculptors; Étienne Le Hongre (1628–1690), French sculptor known for his work at Versailles; Gaspard (ca. 1625–1681) and his brother Balthazard Marsy (1628–1674), French sculptors employed by

eral others who are still working, lived during the reign of the late King. So did Poussin, Le Sueur, Le Brun, Coypel, Jouvenet, Les Boulognes, Forest, Rigault, and others who bring honour to our nation.[204] Was it not during his reign that Mansart[205] worked? Vermeulen, Mellan, Edelink, Simonneau, Nanteuil, the Poillys, Masson, Pitau, Van-Schupen, Miss Stella, Gérard Audran, Le Clerc, Picard,[206] and so many others, some dead, some still alive, have excelled in all types of engraving. We have also had, during the same period, goldsmiths and medallists such as Varin,[207] who deserve to have their reputations last as long as those of Dioscorides and Alcimedon.[208] Sarasin, the Corneilles,[209] Molière,

---

Louis XIV at Versailles; François Girardon (1628–1715), French sculptor employed by Louis XIV at Versailles; Martin Desjardins, née Martin van den Bogaert (1637–1694), French sculptor of Dutch birth, employed by Louis XIV; Antoine Coysevoix (1640–1720), French sculptor employed at Versailles and elsewhere; Pierre Le Gros (the Younger) (1666–1719), French sculptor active in Rome or his father Pierre Le Gros (the Elder) (1629–1714), French sculptor mainly active at Versailles; Jean-Baptise Théodon (1645–1713), French sculptor mainly active in Rome; Pierre Puget (1620–1694), French painter, sculptor, and architect.

204 Antoine Coypel (1661–1722), history painter; rector of the Académie de peinture et de sculpture from 1707 and director from 1714.

205 François Mansart (1598–1666), French architect responsible for the introduction of classicism into French architecture. His work includes the Château de Maisons and the Church of Val-de-Grâce.

206 Cornelis Vermeulen (1644–1708), Flemish engraver who spent time in France; Claude Mellan (1598–1688), French engraver and painter; Gérard Edelinck (1640–1707), Flemish engraver active in Paris; Charles Louis Simonneau (1645–1728), French engraver; Robert Nanteuil (1623–1678), French engraver and pastelist; François Poilly or de Poilly (1623–1693), French engraver; his younger brother, Nicolas de Poilly (1626–1698), Nicolas's sons, Jean-Baptiste de Poilly (1669–1728) and Nicolas de Poilly (1675–1725), were also engravers; Antoine Masson (1636–1700), French engraver and painter; Nicolas Pitau (1632–1671), French engraver born in Flanders or his son Nicolas Pitau the Younger (1670–1724), French publisher and printmaker; Pieter van Schuppen, also known as Pierre Louis van Schuppen (1627–1702), Flemish painter and engraver who worked in France; either Antoinette Bouzonnet-Stella (ca. 1641–1676) or her sister Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella (1636–1697), French engravers; Gérard Audran (1640–1703), French engraver; Sébastien Leclerc or Le Clerc (1637–1714), French artist who specialized in engraving; probably Etienne Picart (1632–1721), French engraver.

207 Jean Varin (1604–1672), French engraver, sculptor, and medallionist.

208 Pedanius Dioscorides (40–90), Greek physician and pharmacologist; Alcimedon is the name of several characters in Greek mythology; the figure to whom Du Bos refers is uncertain.

209 Du Bos refers to Pierre Corneille and his brother, Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), French playwright.

Boileau, Quinault, and Chapelle have, successively, been the contemporaries of these illustrious people. They even lived at the same time as Le Nôtre,[210] so famous for having perfected, and even in a way created, the art of landscape architecture, which is practiced in most of Europe today. Lully came to France so young that he can be regarded as French, though he was born in Italy. He so excelled in music that he has made people everywhere envious. He lived at the same time as people who were unusually talented at playing all sorts of instruments.

During the reign of the King, every genre of eloquence and learning was cultivated by people who could serve as models for scholars who, in the future, apply themselves to the same studies. Father Petau, Father Sirmond, du Cange, de Launoy, de Valois, Duchesne, d'Herbelot, Vaillant, Father Rapin, Father Commire, Father Mabillon, Father Achery, Father Thomassin, Arnauld, Pascal, Nicole, Father Le Bossu, Le Maître, de La Rochefoucauld, Cardinal de Retz, Bochard, Saumaise, Father Malebranche, Claude, Descartes, Gassendi, Rohault, Abbé Régnier, Patru, Huet, de la Bruyère, Fléchier, de Fenelon Archbishop of Cambray, Bossuet Bishop of Meaux, Father Bourdaloue, Father Mascaron, Father Desmares, de Vaugelas, d'Ablancourt, the Abbé of Saint Réal, Pellison, Régis, Perrault,[211] and so many other have seen the birth of the masterpieces of poetry, painting, and sculpture that will make our era famous forever.

---

210 André Le Nôtre (1613–1700), French landscape architect. Le Nôtre worked for Louis XIV and his most important work is found in the grounds at the Palace of Versailles. He produced formal gardens or *jardins à la française*.

211 Denis Pétau (1583–1652), Jesuit and theologian; Jacques Sirmond (1559–1651), Jesuit and scholar who edited Byzantine and medieval chroniclers; Charles du Fresne, Sieur du Cange (1610–1688), philologist and historian of the Middle Ages; Jean de Launoy, also known as Joannes Launoius (1603–1678), French historian known for scepticism about papal supremacy; Henri Valois, also known as Henricus Valesius (1603–1676), philologist and historian; Du Bos probably refers to François Duchesne (1616–1693), French historian and author of *History of the Chancellors of France* (1680); Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville (1625–1695), French orientalist; Du Bos probably refers to François Vaillant de Gueslis (1646–1718), Jesuit missionary to Canada; René Rapin (1621–1687), French Jesuit poet and scholar; his *Réflexions sur la poétique d'Aristotle et sur les ouvrages des poétes anciens et modernes* (1674) influenced Batteux; Jean Commire (1625–1702), Jesuit author of poems, fables, epigrams and other works; Jean Mabillon (1632–1707), Benedictine monk and scholar, founder of palaeography and diplomatics; Luc d'Achery (1609–1685), Benedictine and student of medieval manuscripts; Louis Thomassin, also known as Ludovicus Thomassinus (1619–1695), oratorian, theologian and literary critic; Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694), theologian, philosopher, and mathematician. A Jansenist, author of a logic text that was in use for about 200 years, a correspondent of Leibniz and one of the major philosophers of his time; Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), philosopher, mathematician, physi-

We see in the two generations that have given France the famous scholars I have just named, a multitude of great men of all professions. How many great magistrates have been produced in this era so productive of genius? The names of Condé and Turenne[212] will be titles conferred on a great captain, as long as the French people endure. What a great man Marshall de Guébriant[213] would have been if premature death had not struck him down in his prime. All of the talents necessary in war have been displayed by people of distinction. Mar-

---

cist, best known as author of *Pensées*; Pierre Nicole (1625–1695), Jansenist theologian; René Le Bossu (1631–1680), French literary critic and philosopher; his *Traité du poème épique* (1675) was praised by Boileau and influenced Charles Batteux; Antoine Le Maistre (or Le Maître) (1608–1658), French lawyer, translator, and man of letters; François VI, Duc de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), man of letters best known for his memoirs and *Maximes* (1665); Jean François Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz (1613–1679), cardinal, diplomat and author of memoirs; Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), Protestant biblical scholar who had a major influence on biblical exegesis in the 17th century; Bishop of Clermont from 1687 until his death; Claude Saumaise, known in Latin as Claudius Salmasius (1588–1653), classicist, theologian, and professor at Leiden; Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), priest and rationalist philosopher, best known for his doctrine of occasionalism; Du Bos possibly refers to Jean Claude (1619–1687), Protestant theologian; René Descartes (1596–1650), mathematician and philosopher; a founder of modern philosophy and of rationalism; Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), priest, astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher; a correspondent of Descartes; Jacques Rohault (1618–1672), physicist, mathematician, and Cartesian philosopher; François-Séraphin Régnier-Desmarais (1632–1713), clergyman, diplomat, poet, translator, grammarian, and member of the Académie française; Olivier Patru (1604–1681), jurist, writer, and member of the Académie française; Pierre Daniel Huet (1630–1721), bishop and classical scholar; Jean de La Bruyère (1645–1696), French philosopher and moralist, best known today for his satirical character sketches in *Caractères* (1688); Esprit Fléchier (1632–1710), orator known for his sermons and Bishop of Mîmes from 1687; François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, usually known as François Fénelon (1651–1715), poet, novelist, theologian, and archbishop, best known today as the author of the novel *Les Aventures de Télémaque*; Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, who was known by the epithet "Aigle de Meaux" (Eagle of Meaux) (1627–1704), bishop and orator, renowned for his sermons; Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704), Jesuit known for his sermons, which made him famous in his lifetime; Jules Mascaron (1634–1703), popular preacher; Joseph Desmares (1603–1687), orator, theologian and Jansenist; Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585–1650), man of letters, grammarian, and courtier; Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt (1606–1664), translator of Greek and Latin classics and member of the Académie française; César Vichard de Saint-Réal (1639–1692), novelist and historian; Paul Pellison (1624–1693), writer on historical, political, and religious matters; Pierre-Sylvain Régis (1632–1707), philosopher and critic of Spinoza.

212 Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (1530–1569), a leader of the Huguenots. He was killed in the French wars of religion. Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne (1611–1675), soldier and Marshal of France.

213 Jean-Baptiste Budes, compte de Guébriant (1602–1643), marshal of France. He was a commander in the Thirty Years' war, and won victories at Wolfenbüttel and Kempen, for which he was given the marshal's baton. He died on the battlefield.

shal de Vauban is regarded by all of the armies of Europe, and not just that of France, as the leading military engineer.[214] The several ministers who served the late King still enjoy a European reputation. Let us hope for successors to these illustrious people, who are dead but still not replaced. And let us hope that the flourishing Raphaels of every profession who are still alive will leave us at least Giulio Romanos to console us for their loss.

Velleius Paterculus wrote his history in about the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. He made the same observations on the fate of the illustrious eras that had preceded him as I have made on them, and as I have made on the other illustrious eras that have occurred since he wrote. This is what he wrote at the end of his last book:

> I cannot refrain from noting a subject which has often occupied my thoughts but has never been clearly reasoned out. For who can marvel sufficiently that the most distinguished minds in a branch of human achievement have happened to adopt the same form of effort, and to have fallen within the same narrow space of time? [...] A single epoch, and that only of a few years' duration, gave lustre to tragedy through three men of divine inspiration, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. So, with Comedy, a single age brought to perfection that early form, the Old Comedy, through the agency of Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis; while Menander, and Philemon and Diphilus, his equals in age rather than in performance, within the space of a very few years invented the New Comedy and left it to defy imitation. The great philosophers, too, who received their inspiration from the lips of Socrates—their names we gave a moment ago—how long did they flourish after the death of Plato and of Aristotle? What distinction was there in oratory before Isocrates, or after the time of his disciples and in turn of their pupils? So crowded were they into a brief epoch that there were no two worthy of mention who could not have seen each other.
>
> This phenomenon occurred among the Romans as well as among the Greeks. For, unless one goes back to the rough and crude beginnings, and to men whose sole claim to praise is that they were the pioneers, Roman tragedy centres in and about Accius; and the sweet pleasantry of Latin humour reached its zenith in practically the same range under Caecilius, Terence, and Afranius. In the case of the historians also, if one adds Livy to

214 Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707), Marshal of France and the leading military engineer. On the basis of fifty years of military experience, de Vauban wrote *De L'Attaque et de la defense des places*, which was first published in 1737 and reprinted many times.

> the period of the older writers, a single epoch, comprised within the limits of eighty years, produced them all, with the exception of Cato and some of the old and obscure authors. Likewise the period which was productive of poets does not go back to an earlier date or continue to a later. Take oratory and the forensic art at its best, the perfected splendour of eloquence in prose, if we again except Cato—and this I say with due respect to Publius Crassus, Scipio, Laelius, the Gracchi, Fannius, and Servius Galba—eloquence, I say, in all its branches burst into flower under Cicero, its chief exponent, so that there are few before his day whom one can read with pleasure, and none whom one can admire, except men who had either seen Cicero or had been seen by him. One will also find, if one follows up the dates closely, that the same thing holds true of the grammarians, the craftsmen in clay, the painters, the sculptors, and that pre-eminence in each phase of art is confined within the narrowest limits of time.
>
> Though I frequently search for the reasons why men of similar talents occur exclusively in certain epochs and not only flock to one pursuit but also attain like success, I can never find any of whose truth I am certain.[215]

Paterculus is an even greater authority on this matter because his contemporaries had in their hands an infinity of works that we no longer have. Today, most are lost and we do not know, so to speak, how to judge the case as well as they could judge it then. Moreover, experience of what has happened since Paterculus gives new weight to his reflections. We have seen that the fate of the era of Leo X was the same as that of the era of Plato and that of Augustus.

215 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 1.16.1–17.5. Note that contrary to what Du Bos says, this is not from the end of the last book.

CHAPTER 14

How Physical Causes Can Play a Part in Determining Famous Eras. Of the Influence of Air on the Human Body.

In order to explain the position that we have advanced, and that we have supported with facts, we can hold that there are countries where it appears that people are not born to excel in certain professions, just as there are countries where certain plants cannot thrive.[1] We can also hold that, just as the seeds that we sow, and mature trees do not always produce equally well every year in countries where they thrive, young students living in the most favourable climate do not always develop into equally polished adults. Certain years can be more favourable to the physical education of children than other years, as some years are better than others for the foliage of trees and plants. Indeed, the human machine is scarcely less dependent on the qualities of air in a country, on variations to which these qualities are subject, and on all changes that can help or hinder what we call the 'operations of nature,' than are fruits.

Two seeds from the same plant produce fruits of different qualities when the seeds are sown in different soils or when they are sown in the same soil in different years. Similarly, two children born with the brains made from precisely the same matter will become people with different thoughts and inclinations, if one of these children is raised in Sweden and the other in Andalusia. They will even become different if they are raised in years whose temperatures are different, even though they are raised in the same country. During the life of a person, so long as the soul remains united with the body, the character of our minds and inclinations depends a lot on the properties of our blood. Blood supplies the matter that makes possible people's growth in childhood and youth. Now, the properties of blood depend a lot on the air that we breathe. These properties depend even more on the air in which we have been raised, because that has determined the properties of our blood during our childhood. The qualities contributed then to the formation of our organs that, by a necessary connection, subsequently contributes in maturity to the qualities of our blood. This is why nations that live in different climates have such different minds and inclinations.

1 In this chapter, Du Bos is influenced by the views of Johannes Hofer (1669–1752), Swiss doctor. With his *Dissertatio medica de nostalgia, oder Heimwehe* [Medical dissertation on nostalgia, or homesickness] (Basel: 1688), Hofer coined the word 'nostalgia'.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_069

But the properties of air depend, in turn, on the nature of the emanations of the earth that the air surrounds. Air varies according to the composition of the earth that it encloses. For the emanations of the earth, which is a composite body in which fermentation is continually occurring, cannot be of precisely the same nature, even in the same country. However, these emanations cannot vary without changing the temperature of the air and without altering in certain ways its properties. Thus, in virtue of this vicissitude, the air must sometimes change the mind and humours of the people of a certain country, since there must be eras more favourable than others for the physical education of children. Thus certain generations in France will be more sensible and lively than others. The explanation for this is of the same nature as the explanation of the fact that people have more liveliness in some countries than in others. This difference between two generations in the same country happens as a result of the same cause that makes the climate vary from year to year, and one harvest better than another.

Let us discuss the reasons we can use to explain this phenomenon, after warning the reader to distinguish between the facts that I have reported and the explanations of these facts that I am going to hazard. If the physical explanations of the facts are unsuccessful, my error in this regard would not undermine the undeniable facts. Nor would the failure of the physical explanations prove that only human causes determine the fate of the arts and letters. The effect is not less certain because I have given a bad explanation of the cause.

The air that we breathe communicates to the blood in our lungs the qualities that are stamped on it. Air also deposits on the surface of the earth the matter that contributes most to its fertility. We take care to fertilize and work the earth because we recognize that the earth is most fertile when many of its parts have had the opportunity to absorb this atmospheric matter. People eat part of the harvest that the earth produces, and they abandon the rest to animals, whose flesh they subsequently convert into their own substance. The properties of the air are also communicated to the waters of springs and rivers by means of snow and rain, which are infused with some of the corpuscles suspended in the air.

The air that has so great an influence over our machines is a compound substance composed of elementary air plus the emanations that escape from all the bodies that it infuses or that its constant motion can detach. Scientists have also proved that air is full of an infinity of little animals and their seeds. This is enough to make it easy for us to conceive that air must be subject to an infinity of alterations that result from the mixture of the corpuscles of which it is composed. Its composition cannot always be the same and the quantity of air cannot even be the same at all times. We can also easily understand that of

the various alterations, to which air is successively subject, some must endure longer than others and that some must be more favourable than others to products of nature.

Air is also subject to several vicissitudes that result from external causes, such as the effects of the sun, which vary with its height, proximity, and exposure, as well as the nature of the soil that the sun's rays strike. The same is true of the effects of the wind from neighbouring countries. The causes that I call external make the air subject to vicissitudes in temperature and humidity. Sometimes changes to the air cause these vicissitudes and sometimes vicissitudes of the air cause alterations. But this discussion is not essential to our subject, and we do not know how to filter out the things that are not absolutely necessary to clarify it.

The qualities the air of a certain country has must have a power over people, and particularly children, in virtue of its properties, that we may call its permanent properties. Nothing gives us a better idea of this power than recalling our knowledge of the air's simple vicissitudes, or passing alterations, which has power even on people whose organs are fully mature. The qualities of the air that result from its composition are much more durable than these vicissitudes.

However, the inclinations and even the thoughts of people depend a lot on vicissitudes of the air. Depending on whether the air is dry or humid, hot, cold, or temperate, we are automatically happy or sad, content or sorrowful without reason. In short, we find it more or less easy to turn our minds to what we want to do. If vicissitudes in the air go so far as to alter it, the effect of these variations is even more apparent. The fermentation which leads to a thunderstorm does not merely seriously agitate our minds and make it impossible for us to think with our ordinary liberty of thought, but it also corrupts meat. It is enough to alter the state of an illness, or of a wound. It is often fatal for those who have been operated on for kidney stones.

The poet Vida himself experienced several periods when creative work became irksome. He attributed this to the effects of air on our machine. In fact, we can say that our minds register the present state of the air with a precision approaching that of barometers and thermometers.

> *... quod coeli mutatur in horas*
> *Tempestas, hominumque simul quoque pectora mutant.*
> [*Poetics* Bk. 2][2]

2 Vida, *The Art of Poetry* 2.398–399: "Since as the sky's weather is changed over the year, at the same time the hearts of men also change."

The effects of various atmospheric changes are noticeable even in animals. According to whether the air is calm or agitated, light or brooding, it inspires gaiety in animals, or throws them into a languor that is apparent to the least attention.

> *Vertuntur species animorum et pectora motus*
> *Nunc alios, alios, dum nubila ventus agebat,*
> *Concipiunt: hinc ille avium concentus in agris*
> *Et laetae pecudes et ovantes gutture corvi.*
> [Virg. *Georg*. Bk. 1][3]

The same is true of dispositions caused by excessive heat, that amount almost to madness. If, in the course of a year, twenty serious crimes are committed in Rome, fifteen are committed in the two hottest months. There is a country in Europe where people who kill themselves are less rare than they are in others.[4] It has been noted in the capital of this kingdom, where a registry of deaths is kept, that records each type of death, that of sixty people who kill themselves in the course of a year, fifty are carried to this excess of madness towards the beginning of winter or at the very end. This country has a prevailing wind from the Northeast that makes the sky dark and noticeably affect the bodies of the most robust people. The judges in the national courts of France make an observation that shows the same thing. They note that some years produce more serious crimes than others and we cannot attribute the evil of these years to an unusual dearth of food, to the disbanding of soldiers, or other apparent causes.

Extreme cold freezes the imaginations of an infinity of people. It completely changes the moods of others. People who are sweet and good-tempered in other seasons become almost fierce during hard frosts. I will present only one

3 Virgil, *Georgics* 1.420–423: "the phases of their minds change, and their breasts now conceive impulses, other than they felt when the wind was chasing the clouds. Hence that chorus of the birds in the fields, the gladness of the cattle, and the exulting cries of the rooks."

4 Du Bos is most likely referring to England, which had a reputation in France and Germany for having the highest suicide rate in the 18th century. This reputation was acquired by popular travel literature, although there was no statistical evidence for the claim. See Roland Bartel, "Suicide in Eighteenth-Century England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59.2 (1959–1960), 145–158. On p. 146, Bartel claims that it had been thought that this reputation was first alleged by Montaigne, but Bartel claims that the first French reference comes from Voltaire, the *nom de plume* of François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), French writer and philosopher, in an article he published in 1739. However, without naming the country explicitly, it appears that Du Bos was in fact the first.

example, but this will be the example of a King of France, Henry III. De Thou,[5] whose narrative I will translate, was a man covered in great dignity. He has made public a biography of a prince that he had known well. This biography was written when Henry had been dead only a few years.

> When Henry III began to live in a regulated manner, he was rarely sick. He manifested only during very cold weather some signs of the melancholy that his servants had noticed. Then they found him disagreeable and difficult to serve, rather than an indulgent and good-natured Prince, as he was at other times. He was disgusted by the things that he enjoyed during frosts. He slept only a little and rose earlier than usual. He worked constantly and he conducted business like a man in an austere mood. At this time, the Prince wanted to eliminate all abuses and he tired his Chancellor and his four Secretaries of States by making them write. Chancellor de Chiverni, having served the king of whom I speak since his infancy, had long since perceived the changes that the cold caused in the temperament of Henry III. I remember a confidence that this magistrate shared with me on this subject. I was passing by Esclimont, a chateau that he owned in the region of Chartrain, on my way to Blois, where the court then was. In the course of conversation, the Chancellor predicted, a few days before the Guises were killed, that if the Duke of Guise continued to make difficulties for the King at the times that he did, that this prince would lock them up between four walls without due process. The mind of the King, he added, was so easily irritated during a frost such as that we had then. This period almost made the King mad.

The Duke of Guise was killed in Blois on Christmas Eve,[6] a few days after the conversation between Chancellor de Chiverni and President de Thou.

The invariable properties of air must have more influence over us than its vicissitudes. Consequently, when these properties are altered, the changes that occur in our machine must be more noticeable and enduring than those caused by vicissitudes in the air. So these alterations sometimes cause epidemics that kill in three months six thousand people in a city in which it would kill two thousand in a normal year.

---

5 Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), French jurist and historian. Du Bos translates an excerpt from de Thou's *Historia sui temporis* (1604–1608), which was written in Latin.

6 Henry I, Prince of Joinville, Duke of Guise (1550–1588), founder of the Catholic League and a central figure in the French Wars of Religion. He was actually assassinated on 23 December, not Christmas Eve.

Another obvious proof that the properties of air have an influence on us is what happens while travelling. We change air while travelling much as we would change it if the air of the country in which we live was altered. The air of one country takes away part of our ordinary appetite, while the air of another country increases it. A French refugee in Holland complains at least three times a day that his gaiety and vivacity of spirit has abandoned him. The air of our birthplace is a cure for us. The illness that is called 'homesickness' in some countries and which gives the sufferer a strong desire to return home, [*Cum*] *notos tristis desiderat haedos* [Juven. *Sat*. 13].[7] It is an instinct that warns us that the air in the place where we find ourselves is not as suitable to our constitution as the air for which a secret instinct makes us pine. Homesickness is not a mental ailment because it is really a bodily ailment. Air too different from the air to which one is habituated is a source of indisposition and illness.

> *Nonne vides etiam caeli novitate et aquarum*
> *Temptari procul a patria quicumque domoque*
> *Adveniunt ideo quia longe discrepitat aer.*
> [Lucretius, bk. 6][8]

The air, though very healthy for the natives of a country, is a slow poison for certain foreigners. Who has not heard tell of *Tabardillo*,[9] a fever accompanied by the most unpleasant symptoms? It attacks nearly all Europeans some weeks after their arrival in Spanish America. The mass of blood formed by the air and foodstuffs of Europe cannot mix with the air of America or with the chyle formed from the foodstuffs of this country. Consequently, it is dissolved. The only way to cure those who are stricken with this frequently fatal illness is to bleed them excessively and to nourish them, little by little, with the foodstuffs of the country. The same disease strikes Spaniards born in America on their arrival in Europe. The native air of the father is a sort of poison for the son.

The difference between the air of one country and another is not apparent to our senses and it is not even detectable by any of our instruments. We are aware of it only from its effects. But there are animals that appear to sense the

7 Juvenal, *Satires* 4.11.13: "and pines for the young goats he knew so well."

8 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 6.1103–1105: "Do you not see also that novelty of climate and water affects any who travel far from home and country, just because there is a great difference in the air?" Du Bos substitutes '*aer*' (air) for the last word of this quotation '*res*' (substances, referring to both the air and water).

9 A Spanish New World term for typhus.

difference. They do not pass from the country that they inhabit to neighbouring territories where the air seems to us to be the same as the air to which they are strongly attached. We do not see on the banks of the Seine a species of large bird with which the Loire is covered.

CHAPTER 15

The Influence of Air on the Human Body Proved by National Character.

Why are all nations so different from one another in body, stature, inclination, and spirit even though they descend from the same parentage? Why after a few generations do new immigrants become so similar to those living in the same country before them, but from whom they did not descend? Why do people who live equidistant from a border seem so different from one another? The robust and the weak, the naturally brave and the naturally timid, are separated by only a mountain. Livy [Liv. *Hist*. 6][1] said that in the Latin war, one could distinguish the Latin troops from Roman troops in the blink of an eye.[2] The Romans were small and weak, whereas the Latins were big and robust. Meanwhile *Latium* and the ancient Roman lands were small, bordered countries. Do the bodies of Andalusians naturally conform to those of the Castillians? Are their Basque neighbours as agile as them? Are beautiful voices as common in Auvergne as in Languedoc? Quintilian said a man's nationality can be recognized by the sound of his voice, just as one recognizes the alloy of the copper by the sound it makes. *Non enim sine causa dicitur Barbarum Graecumve: nam sonis homines, ut aera tinnitu, dignosimus* [*Inst. Orat*. 1.2.c.5].[3] The difference is even more noticeable when we examine nature in countries far away from one another. There is a massive difference between a Negro[4] and a Russian. This difference can only come from the difference in the air in the countries where the ancestors of Negroes and Russians living today, all of whom descended from Adam, are situated. The first men who settled at the equator left descendants that could not have been much different from the descendants of those who settled at the North Pole. Small children born nearer to the Pole and those born near the equator, following the same progression as people everywhere, begin

1 Pliny, *Natural History* 8.16–18.

2 Until the 4th century BC, the Latins, who occupied the Latium region in what is now Italy, were a people sharing common identity, religious practice, and language (Latin). Rome's conquest over Latium occurred in 338 BC in the event described by Livy.

3 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.31: "There is good ground for the common description of an accent as 'barbarian or Greek,' since we distinguish men by their voices as we do bronze by its ring."

4 'Negro' was the term used to refer to people of African descent during this period. It would not have been considered an offensive or inappropriate designation.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_070

to resemble one another less. This resemblance diminishes more and more with each generation and in proportion to locale, those neighbouring the equator and those at the arctic pole, and human races are found to be as different as they are today. Ten centuries were all it took to make the descendants of the same father and mother as different from one another as Negroes and Swedes.

It has been only three centuries since the Portuguese planted their colonies on the west coast of Africa, which they still maintain today, and already the descendants of the first colonists do not resemble the Portuguese born in the Kingdom of Portugal. Portuguese Africans have curly, stiff hair, flattened noses, and broad lips like those of the Negroes that live in that country. For a long time, they have had the same skin colour as Negroes, even though they always still honour themselves with the title *white men*. On the other hand, Negroes in cold countries do not keep the black skin colour that they had in Africa. Their skin begins to whiten, and one can believe that a colony of Negroes set up in England would lose their natural skin colour just as the Portuguese in Cape Verde[5] lost theirs in their neighbouring equatorial countries.

But if climate difference can make such variety in the skin colour, stature, shape, and even the sound of the voice, it makes a bigger difference to the genius, inclinations, and customs of nations. Without comparison, the brain and parts of the body that, physically speaking, determine man's mind and inclinations, are more composed and delicate than the bones and other parts that determine their stature and power. They are more fundamental than those that determine the sound of the voice and the body's agility. Two people having different qualities of blood can be as *dissimilar* on the outside as they are *dissimilar* in spirit. They differ more in inclination than in skin colour and shape.

Experience confirms this reasoning. Peoples' inclinations and minds are more different than their complexions and shapes. As the Ambassador of Rhodes said in the Roman Senate, each people has its own character, and each person has his own. *Tam civitatum quam singulorum hominum mores sunt. Gentes quoque aliae iracundae, aliae audaces, quaedam timidae, in vinum, in venerem proniores aliae sunt* [Liv. *Hist*. bk. 45].[6] After having reported the social reasons that explain the difference between Athenian and Asiatic Greek eloquence, Quintilian said that we must search for it in each natural character.

---

5 Cape Verde (French: *Cap-Vert*; Portuguese: *Cabo Verde*) is a peninsula on the westernmost point of Africa in Senegal. It was first colonized by the Portuguese in 1444, but later taken over by French colonialists.

6 Livy, *History of Rome* 45.23.14: "The character of states is like that of individual men; some nations are hot-tempered, some bold, some diffident, some over-indulgent in wine, others in sex."

> *Mihi autem orationis differentiam fecisse et dicentium naturae videntur, quod Attici limati quidem et emuncti, nihil inane aut redundans ferebant. Asiana gens tumidior alioqui et jactantior vaniore etiam dicendi gloria inflata est.*
>
> [Quint. *Inst.* Bk. 12. Ch. 10][7]

In fact, drunkenness and other vices are more common among one people than another. The same is true of moral virtues. The shape of the organs and temperament create a penchant toward certain vices, or even toward certain virtues that influence most people in every nation. Whenever luxury is introduced, it is always subject to the predominant inclination of the nation that falls into extravagance. Following a nation's taste, people are destroyed by magnificence, by putting up lavish buildings, having a fine meal, eating, and drinking to excess. A great Spaniard is destroyed by chivalry. A titled Pole is ruined by wine and brandy.

In every country that Roman communion is taken, the Catholic religion is essentially the same with respect to its ceremony and dogma. Nevertheless, every nation puts a lot of its particular character into practicing its ceremonies. Following the genius of each nation, it is executed with more or less pomp, more or less dignity, either with outward demonstrations of penitence, or with joyfulness.

Few brains are so badly formed as not to make a man of wit, or at least a man of imagination, in a certain climate; the opposite is true of another climate.

Although the Beotians and the Athenians were separated only by Mount Citheron, the former were so well known to be coarse people that to express the stupidity of some man we say that he appears to have been born in Beotia, as compared to Athenians who appear the smartest people in all the world. I do not want to mention the praises that Greek writers had for Athenian taste and wit. The majority, one might say, were either born in or chose to live in Athens. But Cicero, who knew Athenians after having lived for a long time among them, and whom one would not suspect of fawningly flattering subjects of the Republic, gave the same favourable account as the Greeks: *Athenienses quorum semper fuit sincerum prudensque judicium, nihil ut possent nisi incor-*

7 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.10.17: "I prefer to think that the stylistic difference is due to the character both of the orators and of their audiences. The polished and refined Athenians could not bear emptiness and redundance, while the Asiatics, who are in other respects a more bombastic and boastful race, were more vainglorious also in their oratory."

ruptum audire, et elegans [*De Oratore*].[8] In the preface to *Les Plaideurs*,[9] Racine said that the Athenians never laughed at silliness, which is a translation in different words of a Latin passage in Cicero.[10] To use the words of Montaigne, those who censured the French author who wrote it have slapped Cicero across the face, showing that one cannot blame the fact he said it.

The reason there is such a difference between Athenians and Boetians, and makes Florentines resemble their neighbours so little, is the same. Even in France we see so much sense and wit in peasants of a province bordering on another where people are basically idiots. Although difference in air quality could not be so great in these provinces to make their exterior bodies different, it is different enough to make the organs that immediately support the functions of the soul very different.

We find minds that seem not to be of the same species when we further reflect on the genius of people who differ so much in shape and skin colour. Does a peasant from North Holland and a peasant from Andalusia think the same way? Do they have the same passions? Do they feel the passions they both have in the same way? Do they want to be governed in the same way? When this external difference becomes even greater, the difference between their minds becomes immense. The mind of the Chinese does not resemble that of the Europeans'. "See how much the face of nature is changed between here and China," says the author of *The Plurality of Worlds*.[11] "Other faces, other figures; other manners, and nearly other principles of reasoning" [M. de Fontenelle, *Plur. Des mondes*. Second evening].

---

8 Cicero, *Orator* 25: "*Athenienses vero funditus repudiaverunt. Quorum semper fuit prudens sincerumque iudicium, nihil ut possent nisi incorruptum audire et elegans*." "And the Athenians utterly repudiated it [i.e., the eloquence of orators], holding with sound and discerning judgement that they could listen to nothing that was not pure and well chosen." Du Bos' quotation is truncated, although the quotation may have circulated during this period in this form. It is found in identical form, for example, in Thomas Sheridan's *British Education: Or, the Source of the Disorders of Great Britain* (Dublin, 1756), 334.

9 Jean Racine's *Les Plaideurs* [The Litigants] (1667).

10 Racine, *Les Plaideurs*: "*Ceux mêmes qui s'y étaient le plus divertis eurent peur de n'avoir pas ri dans les règles et trouvèront mauvais que je n'eusse pas songée plus sérieusement à les faire rire*." [Those same people who were the most delighted were afraid of not having laughed at the right times. They found displeasing what I could not have more seriously dreamt would make them laugh.]

11 Fontenelle's *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* was a popular work on modern science. The popularity of the book, published many times, is due to at least three things. It presented controversial, cutting-edge scientific theory in French language depicting a conversation between a philosopher and a marquise. The books are divided according to the evenings spent walking together in the garden under the stars.

I will not enter into detail here about the character of each nation, nor about the genius that is peculiar to each era. I would prefer to direct my reader to Barclay's *Euphormion*, which treats this topic in a work on satire that normally goes by the title *Icon animorum*.[12] But I will add a reflection to show how probable it is that men's minds and inclinations depend on the air that they breathe, and the land on which they were raised. After a certain number of generations, foreigners, who become habituated to whatever country they are in, always become similar to the older inhabitants of the country where they are settled. Today, the principal European nations have a character particular to the ancient people who inhabited the land where they live today, although these nations did not descend from these ancient people. Let me explain using examples.

Today's Catalans descend mostly from Goths and other foreign people who, when they first settled, brought languages and customs different from those of the people who lived at the time of the Scipio brothers.[13] True, these foreigners abolished the ancient tongue. It was replaced with a language composed of different idioms that they spoke. Custom alone, not nature, decided on that. But in today's Catalans, nature has brought the customs and inclinations of Catalans living at the time of the Scipio brothers back to life. Livy said that the ancient Catalans were just as easy to destroy as disarm. *Ferox gens nullam esse vitam sine armis putat*.[14] All of Europe knows that Catalans are the same today. Do we not recognize Catalans in the depiction Justin made of Iberians? *Corpora hominum ad inediam laboremque, animi ad mortem parati. Dura omnibus et adstricta parcimonia. Illis fortior taciturnitatis cura quam vitae*.[15] Their bod-

12 The *Icon Animorum*, or *The Mirror of Minds*, was the fourth part of a series of attacks on the Jesuits written by John Barclay (1582–1621), Scottish satirical writer. Published in 1614, it describes the source of people's character from their particular genius, which for Barclay was created (not born) by a person's childhood and profession.

13 The Scipio family was prominent and powerful in ancient Rome. Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (d. ca. 280 BC) was a Roman consul and army general. His sons were Lucius Cornelius Scipio (d. 211 BC) and Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus (d. 211 BC). He was the great-grandfather of Scipio Africanus (236–183 BC), the immensely regarded military strategist. Catalonia was the first area in Hispania, now modern Spain, to have been conquered by the Romans and led by Scipio Calvus. Both Scipio Calvus and his brother were killed in Hispania in battle.

14 Livy, *History of Rome* 34.17.7: "A savage people consider life useless without arms." This was a popular quotation and can be found in many other contemporary writings on the differences between nations with regard to their customs and histories. Du Bos has misquoted Livy, however: '*putat*' should be '*rati*.'

15 Justin, *Epitome* 44.2: "The bodies of the people are well-suited for enduring want and exhaustion, and their minds for death. They are all accustomed to a poor, hard frugal-

ies may suffer hunger and undergo great exhaustion. Death does not frighten them. They know little about living, and above all they fear loss of dignity more than other men fear losing their lives. The character of Iberians differs completely from that of the Gauls, as much as the mind of Castillians differs from the mind of today's French.

Although the French descended mainly from Germans and other barbarians settled in Gaul, they have the same inclinations and mental character as ancient Gauls. We recognize in ourselves many of the traits that Caesar,[16] Florus,[17] and ancient historians attributed to them. The marvellous ability to imitate foreign inventions both easily and well is a talent particular to the French, and all of Europe praises them for this speciality. Caesar attributed this talent to the Gauls, which he called *Genus summae solertiae, atque ad omnia imitanda atque efficienda quae ab quoque traduntur aptissimum* [*De Bello Gall.* Bk. 7].[18] Caesar was surprised to see that the Gauls he attacked had copied some of the most complex military Roman machinery, even though it was quite new to them. This is what he attributed to them. Another notable characteristic of the French is their insurmountable penchant for cheerfulness, even out of context, that sometimes leads them to sing and dance during the most serious occasions. In Roman history, we find Gauls depicted in this fashion, and principally in an account from Livy [Livy, *hist.* 23].[19] Hannibal,[20] leading a hundred thousand men, demanded passage into Italy, an area now called 'Languedoc,' and offered to pay good money for what his men needed, threatening at the same time to lay waste to their country with sword and fire if they tried to get in the way of his approach. While they were considering Hannibal's proposition, the Ambassadors of the Roman Republic, who were only a small group, demanded an audience. After having talked up the great names of the Roman

---

ity. They choose war over peace. If there is no foreign enemy they look for one at home. They often die in torture rather than reveal their secrets, since their concern for taciturnity is more resolute than their care for life." Du Bos has abbreviated the quotation, which is translated here in full.

16 Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), Roman politician and general. He wrote a history called *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, or *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, which is usually shortened to *The Gallic War*. This well-known book is Julius Caesar's account of his own experience in this war.

17 Lucius Annaeus Florus (ca. AD 74–130), Roman historian working in Africa. His *Epitome of Roman History* was mainly cribbed from Livy, and often badly done. Its narrative describes the rise and fall of Roman morality.

18 Caesar, *The Gallic War* 7.22: "for the Gauls are a nation possessed of remarkable ingenuity, and extremely apt to copy and carry out anything suggested to them."

19 Livy, *History of Rome* 23.26.9: *"Erumpunt igitur agmine e castris tripudiantes more suo."* "Accordingly they sallied out of the camp in a column, dancing, as is their custom."

20 Hannibal (247–183 BC), Carthaginian military leader and statesman.

people and Senate in front of those gathered to give them their audience, whom the Gauls had heard spoken of only as enemies of their compatriots in Italy, they proposed to block the Carthaginian passage. It fell to the Gauls to make their country into a theatre of war to prevent Hannibal from bringing war to the shores of the Tiber. Truly, this sort of proposal was to be made cautiously even to long-standing allies. Also, said Livy, "it is said that they burst out into such peals of laughter that the magistrates and elders could scarcely reduce the younger men to order." *Tantus cum fremitu risus dicitur ortus, ut vix a Magistratibus Majoribusque natu juventus sedaretur*.[21]

In the history of our civil wars [*Davila* bk. XI],[22] Davila recounts that a similar event happened in meetings held before the siege of Paris by Henry IV [In 1590].[23] The Cardinal of Gondy, having said that it was love, rather than hunger, for the King that led Parisians to engage in discussions, the King's presence could not prevent the young lords from bursting into laughter at the cardinal's speech, which became ridiculous for its audacity. Both parties calmly knew the opposite. All of Europe blames the French for their anxiety and superficiality, which requires them to leave their own country to search elsewhere for employment and to enlist under all kinds of flags. Florus said of the Gauls that there are no armies without Gaulois soldiers: *Nullum bellum sine milite Gallo*.[24] If during Caesar's day we saw Gauls in the service of the kings of Judea, Mauritania, and Egypt, do we not today find the French among all the troops of Europe, even those of the king of Persia and the Great Mogul?[25]

Generally speaking, today the English do not descend from the Britons who lived in England at the time the Romans conquered it. Nevertheless, the terms

---

21 Livy, *History of Rome* 12.20.3. Quotation corrected.

22 Enrico Davila, *History of the French civil wars* [Istoria delle guerre civili di Francia], (Venice: 1630). Enrico Caterino Davila (1576–1631) was an Italian historian. This work underwent over 200 editions and was translated into English as *The Historie of the Civil Warres of France* (1647).

23 Henry IV, given the epithet "the Good" (1553–1610), King of France, 1589–1610. The leader of the Protestant cause, Henry IV, triumphed in the Wars of Religion, converted to the Church of Rome, and became King.

24 There is no such quotation from Florus, the ancient Roman historian. This quotation is given by Gilles Ménage (1613–1692) in his *Menagiana, ou Les Bons Mots et Remarques Critiques* [Menangiana, or wise words, agreeable encounters, judicious thoughts and curious observations of M. Menage of the Academie française], which was a compilation of critical and witty comments published posthumously. Mocked by his contemporaries Boileau and Moliere, Ménage was expelled from the Académie française, where Du Bos later served as Secretary.

25 The Great Mogul was the leader of the Mogul Empire, a Turco-Mongol dynasty in India spanning nearly five million kilometres during the early modern period.

that Caesar and Tacitus used to describe the Britons apply to the English. One was no less subject to jealousy than the other. Tacitus wrote that Agricola found nothing better to make ancient Britons make their children learn Latin, rhetoric, and other arts that the Romans taught to their children than to pique their envy by making them feel shame that they may be surpassed by the Gauls. The mind of the Britons, said Agricola, was of a better calibre than that of the Gauls, and if they applied themselves they would be much more successful than their neighbours. *Iam vero Principum filios liberalibus artibus erudire et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent*.[26] Agricola's ruse succeeded, and the Britons who were dedicated to learning to speak Latin aimed to make themselves capable of doing so. The English can judge for themselves whether the ruse used by Agricola can be used today with such success.

Germany today is a much different state than it was when described by Tacitus. Even though it is filled with cities, instead of the villages of ancient Germany, the forests and swamps have transformed into fields and plowed soil, and the way of life and comporting themselves are different, one can nonetheless recognize the genius and character of the ancient Germans in Germany today. German women, like their ancient counterparts, follow the camps in greater numbers than do women of other peoples. What Tacitus described about German meals is true today. Like the ancient Germans, they reason with one another during the comfort of a meal, but they come to a conclusion only in cold blood. *Deliberant dum fingere nesciunt; constituunt dum errare non possunt*.[27] We find everywhere ancient people in the moderns, even though they profess a different religion and are governed by different laws.

At all times, it has been recognized that climate is more powerful than blood and birthplace. The Gallogrecians,[28] descendants of the Gauls who inhabited Asia, became in just five or six generations as soft and effeminate as Asiatics, even though they were descendants of bellicose ancestors who were located

26 Tacitus, *Agricola* 1.21.2: "Moreover he began to train the sons of the chieftains in a liberal education, and to give a preference to the native talents of the Briton as against the trained abilities of the Gaul. As a result, the nation which used to reject the Latin language began to aspire to rhetoric."

27 Tacitus, *Germania* 22.4: "Deliberation comes when they are incapable of pretense, but decision when they are secure from illusion."

28 Gallo-Grecians, as they were called since the Renaissance, or Galatians, were settlers from France in what is now Turkey. They settled there after the Gallic invasion of the Balkans in 279 BC. Arriving in the thousands to support the besieged leader Nicomedes I, they established a number of cantons around the capital Ankara and were often called upon to support various Greek and Roman armies as mercenary soldiers.

in a country where they could not exist without the help of their valour and weapons. In speaking of an event that took place almost equidistant in time from the establishment of the Gallogrecian colony and its conquest by the Romans, Livy wrote of the Asiatic Gauls, *Gallograeci ea tempestate bellicosiores erant, Gallicos adhuc nondum exoleta stirpe gentis* [*servantes*] *animos*.[29]

Everyone known for military strength becomes soft and cowardly when transplanted to countries where climate softens their national nature. Macedonians who moved to Syria and Egypt became, in just a few years, Syrians and Egyptians. Degenerating from their ancestors, they preserved only their language and their insignia. On the contrary, Greeks who moved to Marseille adopted the audacity and contempt for death particular to the Gauls. But, as Livy said in recounting the facts I just mentioned, what goes for humans goes for plants and animals. For the qualities of plants do not depend on the seed's origin, but on the soil where it is planted. Animals depend less on their breed than on the country where they are born and grow up. *Sicut in frugibus pecudibusque, non tantum semina ad servandam indolem valent, quantum terrae proprietas, coelique sub quo aluntur, mutat. Macedones qui Alexandriam in Egypto, qui Seleuciam ac Babiloniam, quique alias sparsas per orbem terrarum colonias habent, in Syros, Partos, Egyptios degenerarunt. Massilia inter Gallos sita traxit aliquantulum ab accolis animorum. Tarentinis quid ex Spartana dura illa et horrida libertate mansit? Generosius in sua quidquid sede gignitur. Insitum alienae terrae, natura vertente, se degenerat* [Liv. *Hist*. bk. 28].[30]

Successful seeds in one country degenerate when planted in another. A flax seed from Livonia planted in Flanders produces a very beautiful plant. But a flax seed coming from Flanders and planted in the same soil will produce only a degenerate plant. The same is true of the seeds of melon, turnip, and many other vegetable seeds that, in order to flourish, at least after a certain number of generations, need to be replaced by new seeds from countries where

29 Livy, *History of Rome* 37.8.4–5: "The Gallogrecians (Galatians) at that time were of a warlike disposition, still retaining their Gallic tempers, the native strain having not yet disappeared." Quotation corrected.

30 Livy, *History of Rome* 38.17.10–13: "Just as, in the case of plants and animals, the seeds have less power to maintain their natural quality than the character of the soil and climate in which they live have power to change it. The Macedonians who hold Alexandria in Egypt, who hold Seleucia and Babylonia and other colonies scattered throughout the world, have degenerated into Syrians, Parthians, Egyptians; Massilia, situated among the Gauls, has acquired something of the disposition of its neighbours; what have the Tarentines retained of that stern and dreadful Spartan discipline? Whatever grows in its own soil has greater excellence; transplanted to a soil alien to it, its nature changes and it degenerates towards that in which it is nurtured."

they achieve their perfection. Since trees grow and produce more slowly than plants, the same tree provides different fruit depending on the soil where it is located, or from where it has been transplanted. The vine transplanted from Champagne to Brie quickly produces a wine whose qualities produced in its original soil can no longer be detected. True, animals do not draw anything from the soil, as trees and plants do. But since air brings life to animals, and earth nourishes them, their qualities are scarcely less dependent upon where they are raised, just as the qualities of trees and plants depend upon the countries where they grow. Let us carry on consulting our experience.

Since the time Livy wrote his history, many Europeans were sent to colonies with climates more remote and different from their country of birth than the climate of Gaul differs from that of Galatia. The change of manners, inclination, and mindset, unavoidable to those who moved abroad, was felt more suddenly and more obviously in the new colonies than in the old.

The French who settled in the Holy Lands, after they were conquered in the First Crusade, became after a few generations as cowardly and inclined toward crime as the natives of the country. The history of the last Crusades is filled with bitter complaints against the disloyalty and weakness of the Oriental French. The Sultans of Cairo found no other means of preserving the valour and discipline of their troops than getting their recruits from Circassia,[31] where their Mamluks originated.[32] Experience taught them that children of Circassians born and raised in Egypt would have the inclinations and courage of Egyptians. The Ptolemies[33] and other sovereigns of Egypt, who were careful to have good troops, always had a standing army of foreigners. Natives of the country, who are claimed to have achieved such great feats of war under Sesostris[34] and their first kings, were already pretty degenerate by the time of Alexander the Great.[35] Since its conquest by the Persians, Egypt was always a plaything for foreign sol-

31 Circassia is in the North Caucasus along the Black Sea, now a part of Russia.

32 'Mamluk' is the Arabic word for slaves. Specifically, it is a term for soldiers who were recruited in slavery, including Turks, Egyptian Copts, Circassians, Abkhazians, Georgians and Albanians. They became a very powerful ruling military class, although their historical reputation is mixed: some see them as brutal warmongers, others as political heroes. See Il Kwang Sung (ed.), *Mamluks in the Modern Egyptian Mind* (New York: 2017).

33 Ptolemy I Soter (ca. 367–282 BCE) was a general in Alexander the Great's army. He was the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and took control of Egypt, which had been part of Alexander's empire, on Alexander's death. His dynasty lasted over three centuries. Subsequent leaders of Egypt were given the name 'Ptolemy' as well.

34 Sesostris was a king of Egypt in antiquity. He features in Herodotus' *Histories*, where he is described as leading troops into Europe and conquering large parts of the area.

35 Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) was king of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia. Taught by Aristotle, in his short lifetime Alexander conquered enormous areas and cre-

diers. Ever since Cambyses,[36] Egyptians never carried the sword, so to speak, for Egypt. Even today they do not accept Egyptian-born soldiers among the troops recruited by the Great Signor of the Egyptian establishment. These must be composed of soldiers born outside of Egypt.

The Portuguese who have set up in the East Indies have become as soft and timid as those born there. Invincible in Flanders, they make up half of the famous Spanish army destroyed at Rocroi [In 1643],[37] these Portuguese have cousins in the Indies who are left to struggle like sheep. Those able to remember the particular events of the wars of the Low Countries, which gave birth to the republic of Holland, know well that the Flemish infantry could never stand up against the Spanish army. But those who have read the history of Dutch conquests in the East Indies know well that, on the other hand, a small number of Dutch make entire armies of Portuguese Indians flee. I do not want to mention odious books, but will leave it to the Dutch themselves to determine whether their compatriots in the East Indies have preserved their European manners and good qualities.

The court of Madrid always pays serious attention to the character and particular genius of all the different nations it governs, admitting a greater confidence in the children of Spaniards born in Flanders than those born in the Kingdom of Naples. The Spanish Neapolitans are not equal in every respect to Spaniards born in Spain. This circumspect court as a rule never trusts any important work to Spanish Creoles in America. Creoles are inhabitants who are born of a Spanish mother and father, without any mixture of American or African blood. Those born to a Spaniard and an American are called 'mestizos,'[38] and when the mother is Negro they are called 'mulattos.'[39]

---

ated one of the the largest empires in the ancient world. The resulting spread of Greek culture gave rise to the Hellenistic period.

36 Cambyses II (d. 522 BC) was king of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by his father Cyrus the Great (ca. 600–530 BC). At the time, it was the largest empire ever in history, spanning more than five million square kilometres. Cambyses sought to enlarge the empire his father had created and set out to conquer Egypt in 525 BC. The Egyptian army was defeated during a battle at Pelusium.

37 Near the end of the Thirty Years' War and just after the accession of Louis XIV, the French defeated the Spanish army during the Battle of Rocroi, in Flanders. Despite being considerably larger and better equipped, the Spanish suffered heavy losses.

38 The name 'mestizo' derives from the Spanish word for 'mixed.' At the time of colonization, Spain was organized according to a caste system (*sistema de castas*), and mestizos, which were more numerous, were considered to be lower in the social hierarchy than European-born Spaniards.

39 The etymology of 'mulatto' is contested. It is said either to refer to the Spanish word for mule, or from the Arabic word 'muwallad,' denoting that someone has mixed ancestry.

The incapacities of these people had as much to do with this policy as the fear that they would rise up against Spain. It is truly difficult to conceive at what point Spanish blood, so brave and courageous in Europe, degenerated in many American countries. One would not believe it, had twelve or fifteen different pirate expeditions not agreed with everything said here, reporting these convincing circumstances.

Humans and animals have different heights and make-ups according to the country in which they are born or bred. When the Spanish discovered that part of the world, there were no horses in America. One can imagine that the first brought over to be bred were the most beautiful from Andalusia, where they embarked. Since the cost of transportation would be more than two hundred crowns per horse, one would not spare money on the purchase; horses were after all a lot of money in that province. It was in the countries of America where the breed of horses degenerated. Horses in Saint Dominique and Antilles are small, ill-shaped, and have only the courage of the noble animals from which they descended, if it is permitted to explain it this way. Truly, there are other places in America where the Andalusian breed of horses is better off. Horses in Chile are superior in beauty and goodness to Andalusian horses, even surpassing horses in Picardy. Sheep in Castille and Andalusia transported to other pastures do not provide wool as precious as those *quas Baeticus adjuvat aer*.[40] When the goats of Ancyra[41] lost their mountain pasture, they were no longer covered by that valuable fur so coveted in the east, and known all over Europe [Busbequius, *Epist. Prim.*].[42] There are countries where a horse is such

40 Juvenal, *Satires* 12.42: "which the Baetican air aids." Baetica, also known as Hispania Baetica, was one of three Roman provinces on the Iberian Peninsula. It was the southernmost province and was known for its agricultural richness and abundance.

41 Ancyra is now known as the city of Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Turkey.

42 Busbequius, *Turkish Letters* 1: "We saw, also, that sort of goat whose hair, or fleece (if you rather call it so) they make the shagreen or watered stuff, called 'camlet'; if you would know the nature of that creature, I will not entertain you with the story, but give you the correct description of it. The hair of this creature is very fine, and extremely white, and it hangs down from their bodies to the ground. The goat-herds do not shear but comb it off, and it is almost as fine as silk. These goats are often washed in neighbouring rivers, and they feed on the grass growing there, which is very tender and dry. That certainly contributes much to the fineness of their wool, for if they are removed to another place, their fleece changes with their pasture, and their offspring degenerate to such an extent that one would hardly think they are the same breed. The thread that is spun of that hair, or wool, is carried by the women of that country to Ancyra, a city in Galatia, where it is woven into cloth and dyed." Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592), also known as 'Busbequius,' was a Flemish writer and diplomat. His very engaging *Turcicae Epistolae*, or *Turkish Letters*, recount his experience working as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople.

a gentle animal that they allow children to lead it around. In other countries, such as the Kingdom of Naples, it is nearly a wild animal that must be carefully guarded. Horses change their nature according to changes in air and nutrition. Those from Andalusia are much gentler in their country than they are in ours. The majority of animals cease to breed when transported into a climate radically different from their own. Tigers, apes, camels, elephants, and many species of birds do not reproduce in our environs.

CHAPTER 16

Objection Drawn from the Characters of the Romans and the Dutch. Response to the Objection.

It might, perhaps, be objected that today we know of two peoples who do not presently have the characters attributed to them by ancient writers. Today's Romans do not resemble, one might continue, the ancient Romans, so famous for their military virtues. According to Tacitus, ancient Romans were enemies to every pointless demonstration of respect, mere ceremonies. They were a people concerned only with authority. *Apud quos vis imperii valet, inania transmittuntur* [Tacit. *Annal.* Bk. 15].[1] The brother of the King of Parthia, who went to Rome to pay homage, as we would say, for the Crown of Armenia, would have been less afraid of Roman pomp and circumstance, added the author I have just cited, if he had known them better. The Batavians and ancient Frisians, one could continue to object, were martial peoples who rose up when the Romans required any tribute besides military service. Today, the inhabitants of Holland, which is composed of the territory of the Batavians and part of the country of the ancient Frisians, are devoted to commerce and the arts. They surpass all other nations in the ability to police towns and in municipal government. The people of this country more freely pay the highest taxes currently levied in Europe than serve as soldiers. *Ad terrestrem militiam parum idonei sunt Belgae, et equo insidens Batavus ludibrium omnibus debet*, said Pufendorf [*Introd. ad hist. Europ.*][2] in speaking of today's Hollanders, who employ foreign troops as happily as the Batavians waged war for foreigners.

With regard to the Romans, I reply, that when the rest of Europe wants to cure the evil of pomp, the Romans will not be the last to get rid of it. Today pomp is fashionable, and the Romans try to be better in this practice than other nations as they used to be superior in military discipline. Perhaps contemporary Romans would display some modesty after success, and loftiness in the face of danger, that characterized the ancient Romans, if their masters' profession did not forbid them to aspire to military glory. Will you be killed in battle

1 Tacitus, *Annals* 15.31: "Among whom the power of command flourishes and trivialities allowed to pass."

2 *Introductio ad Historiam praecipuorum Regnorum et Statuum modernorum in Europa* (1688), 500. Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–1694), Saxon jurist, philosopher, and historian. "The Belgians are unfit for land service and a Dutchman on horseback is a ridiculous sight."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_071

just because you are brave, as you will write verse because you are born a poet? If Romans have really degenerated, they have not done so in all virtues. No one knows better than them how to hold firm or give way in business, and we notice even in the general population of Rome the art of cultivating esteem for their fellow citizens. This was always one of the primary causes of the great renown of a nation.

Finally, if great changes have occurred in the air of Rome and the surrounding area since the time of the Caesars, it is not surprising that the present inhabitants are different from those of former times. On the contrary, according to my theory, it must be so and a change of cause alters the effect.

Firstly, the air of Rome, with the exception of the neighbourhoods of Trinità di Monte and Quirinal, is so unhealthy during high summer that it can only be endured by those who slowly habituated, just as Mithridates[3] became accustomed to poison. It is even necessary each year to renew the ability to endure the pollution of the air by beginning to breathe it as it begins to change. It is fatal to breathe it for the first time when it is already polluted. We are unsurprised to see someone die who, arriving from the country, lodges in places where the air is polluted, or at that time even lives in places where the air remains healthful. It is as unsurprising as that a man dies when struck by a cannon ball. The cause of this pollution is well known. In the past, Rome was pierced underground, as above ground, and streets had a cesspool under the pavement. All of these sewers emptied into the Tiber by various canals. These canals were constantly sluiced by water from fifteen aqueducts that carried entire rivers to Rome. In the end, these rivers emptied into the Tiber via the apertures of the cesspools. The buildings of this vast city have been damaged by the Goths, the Normans of Naples, and time. Debris from structures built on the seven hills have filled the adjacent valleys. In these ancient valleys, the ancient ground level is often buried forty feet deep. Such an upheaval has blocked several of the channels by which a lot of medium-sized cesspools joined with the big cesspools that terminated in the Tiber. The vaults crushed by the fall of neighbouring buildings, or collapsed from old age, ended up closing many canals and stopping the flow of water. However, most of the sewers by which rainwater, as well as water from the remaining ancient aqueducts that have remained open, cascade into cesspools. Thus, water has continued to enter these channels, without draining. There it stagnates and becomes so infected that when scavengers open, while digging, one of these channels, the stench and infection that issues from

3 Mithridates VI (135–63 BC), King of Pontus in modern day Turkey and a resourceful opponent of Roman expansionism. He was so afraid of being assassinated that he self-administered small quantities of poison as a way of building up immunity.

them often gives the scavengers fatal diseases. Those who have dared to eat the fish that are sometimes found there have nearly all paid with their lives for their reckless curiosity. These channels are not so far underground that the heat, which is very great in Rome during the dog days, cannot draw from them pestilent fumes. These fumes escape so easily since the cracks in the vaults are only blocked with rubble and gravel. These are a weaker barrier than natural terrain or ordinary soil.

Secondly, the air on the Roman plain, which extends twelve leagues in the places where the Apennines are furthest from the city, reduces for the three hottest months even the natives of this country, who must be accustomed to it from infancy, to a state of languor incredible to those who have not seen it. In several areas, monks are obliged to leave their convents and spend the dog days somewhere else. Indeed, at that time the air of the Roman countryside kills as quickly as enemy steel the foreigner who dares expose himself to its effects during the siesta. The air is always dangerous, no matter which direction the wind blows. This is evidence that the earth causes the air's alteration. This infection proves that the earth has changed considerably. This may be because the earth is not cultivated as it was in the time of the Caesars, or because the swamps of Ostia and Osanté [Pomptinae Paludes][4] are not drained as they used to be, or, finally, because the alteration results from the alum, sulphur, and arsenic mines which have successfully operated under the earth for several centuries. These mines currently send into the air, mainly during the summer, fumes more dangerous than were emitted when they were not as developed as they are today. We frequently see in the Roman countryside a phenomenon that obliges us to think that the alteration of the air is the result of a new cause, that is, mines developed under the earth. During hot spells, fumes issue forth and ignite, forming long furrows or columns of fire with the earth as their base. If this phenomenon of the Roman countryside occurred at the time Livy wrote, his narrative would be full of the sacrifices made to extinguish these marvels.

The physical alteration of the air of Rome and its environs is also proved by the fact that the climate is less cold today than it was at the time of the first Caesars, though then the country was more heavily populated and better cultivated than it is at present. The Annals of Rome tell us that, in the year 480 of the Roman calendar, the winter was so bitter that trees died. The Tiber froze in Rome and snow remained on the ground for forty days. When Juvenal described a superstitious woman, he said that she had to break the ice on the Tiber to bathe herself.

4 The Pontine Marshes.

Hibernum fracta glacie descendet in amnem,
Ter matutino Tiberi mergetur et ipsis
Verticibus timidum caput abluet, inde superbi
Totum regis agrum nuda ac tremibunda cruentis
Erepet genibus.
[Juven. *Sat.* 6][5]

He speaks of the Tiber freezing in Rome as an ordinary event. Several passages of Horace suppose that the streets of Rome are full of snow and ice. We would be better informed if the ancients had had thermometers, but their writers, though they did not think about informing us on this matter, still tell us enough to convince us that the winters were harsher in those days than they are today. Today, the Tiber scarcely freezes more than the Nile in Cairo. We think that Rome's winter is very harsh when the snow lasts for two days and when twice in forty-eight hours there are some icicles in a fountain with a northern exposure.

As for the Dutch, I reply that they do not inhabit the territory in which the Batavians and Frisians inhabited, though they remain in the same country. The region of the Batavians was a low country, but it was wooded. With regard to the country of the ancient Frisians, which currently makes up a large part of Holland, namely that which is enclosed by the North Sea, the Zuiderzee, and the old bed of the Rhine, which passes Leiden. In antiquity, it was covered in hollow hills. This is the meaning of the name 'Holland,' introduced in the Middle Ages: it means empty earth in the language of that country. Tacitus [Tacit. *Annal.* Bk. 2][6] tells us that the arm of the Rhine of which I speak, which then separated Frisia from the region of the Batavians, maintained the swiftness that this river has in its course. This is a proof that the country was mountainous. The sea introduced itself into the cavities causing the earth to sink. With the assistance of sands that the waves of the sea have brought in, and the silt that rivers deposited by frequently flooding, before they were contained in dykes, the earth has raised itself above the water that covered it.

Another proof of my thesis is that in the piece of Holland that was part of ancient Frisia, in digging foundations, trees, still held by their roots, are often found fifteen feet below grade. However, this country is as level as a floor and

5 Juvenal, *Satires* 6.522–526: "In the wintertime she'll break the ice, step down into the river and submerge herself three times in the morning Tiber, even cleansing her terrified head in those swirling waters. Then, naked and shivering, she'll crawl right across the proud King's field on bleeding knees."

6 Tacitus, *Annals* 2.6.

is below the high tide line and even with low tide line. This demonstrates that soil, in which the trees of which I speak are rooted, is sunken. Those who wish to look further into this matter and into the other circumstances of these floods, can read the first two volumes of the work by Menson Alting, entitled *Descriptio Agri Batavi*.[7] They will not read without profit or without regretting this author died thirty years ago, before he had published the third volume. Holland, having been drained and then subsequently re-populated, is today a level plain, crossed by many canals and sown with some lakes and patches of water [Tacit. *Annal.* Bk. 4].[8] Nature has so completely changed the terrain that the oxen and cows of this country are bigger than they are elsewhere, while in the past they were very small. Finally, a quarter of the land is currently covered in water, rather than the twelfth that used to be covered. The people, due to events that are beyond the scope of this essay, have multiplied more than in any other country of Europe. Necessity and the ease of having vegetables and dairy cattle in continuous fields and the ease of catching fish in the midst of so much fresh and salt water, have accustomed the inhabitants to support themselves with these phlegmatic foods. In contrast, their ancient predecessors ate the meat of their flocks and of domestic animals who had become wild. According to Tacitus and other ancient writers the woods were full of these.

Sir William Temple was struck by the difference between the characters of the Batavians and the Dutch. In giving an explanation, he attributes the difference to change of diet [*State of the United Provinces*, ch. 4].[9] Similar upheavals on the surface of the earth always cause a lot of change in the properties of the air. They have also been followed by such great changes in ordinary foods since the new inhabitants are fed by fishers and gardeners rather than by hunters, as were the old inhabitants. Similar upheavals do not happen without changes to the character of the inhabitants of a country.

After all that I have said, it is more than probable that the particular genius of each people depends on the properties of the air that it breathes. We have

7 Menson (or Menso) Alting (1636–1713), Dutch mayor and scholar. The title of the book to which Du Bos refers is *Descriptio secundum antiquos agri Batavi et Frisii una cum conterminis: sive Notitia Germaniae inferioris cis et ultra Thenum* (Amsterdam: 1697).

8 Tacitus, *Annals* 4.72: "No one had given particular attention to their firmness or size, until Olennius, a leading centurion appointed to the Frisian governorship selected the hide of the aurochs as the standard for the contributions. The demand, onerous enough to any people, was the less endurable in Germany; where the forests teem with huge animals, but the domesticated herds are of moderate size."

9 *Observations on the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673), ch. 4. Sir William Temple (1628–1699), English statesman and essayist, best known today for his contribution to the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.

reason to blame the climate for the scarcity of geniuses and minds adapted to certain things, which is noticeable in certain nations. "The temperature in hot climates," noted Chardin, "enervates the mind as well as the body and takes away the spark of imagination necessary for invention. People are not capable in these climates of long observation or focused concentration which gives birth to works of the liberal arts and the mechanical arts. Only towards the north must we look for the highest achievements in the arts and crafts" [*Descrip. De la Perse*, ch. 7].[10] This author is referring to Isfahan, and Rome and Athens are northern relative to the capital of Persia. This view is founded on experience. Does not everyone attribute the stupor of Negroes and Laplanders to excessive heat and cold?

10 John Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient* [Voyages of the Gentleman Chardin to Persia and other places in the Orient] (Paris: 1686).

CHAPTER 17

On the Range of Climates More Appropriate to Arts and Sciences Than Others. On the Changes That Survive in These Climates.

It will be argued against my view that arts and sciences have flourished in very different climates. Memphis, one may add, is closer to the sun than Paris by eighteen degrees, and yet arts and sciences have flourished in both cities.

I reply that every excess of heat and cold does not run counter to the good nutrition of children, but only the extremes, whether hot or cold. Far from setting a temperature limit of four or five degrees suitable to the cultivation of the sciences and the fine arts, I believe there could be as much as twenty or twenty-five degrees of latitude. This fortunate climate can be extended and gain more ground with the help of several events.

For example, today the sheer extent of commerce provides northern nations with means they previously lacked to make wine, and other goods coming from warmer climates, a part of their everyday diet. Commerce, which has been vastly expanded in the last two centuries, has made what was previously unfamiliar known. It has made things commonly available in places where previously they were very rare. Increase in commerce has made wine as common a drink in many countries where grapes do not grow, as it is in those countries with vintages. It has put sugar and spices in Northern countries as commodities for general consumption. Both simple and complex brandy,[1] tobacco, coffee, chocolate, and other commodities grown only under intense sunlight have been available for some time among common people, in Holland, England, Poland, Germany, and in the North. Salts and spiritual emissions inject a soul or, to speak as doctors do, an ethereal oil, into the blood of a Northerner that cannot be found in other foods of their country. These emissions fill a Northern man's blood with animal spirits created in Spain, and under other hot climates. A bit of air and sap of the land of the Canary Islands is brought into England through their wines, which are imported there in such great quantity. Regular, frequent use of commodities from these warm countries brings, so to speak, the sun closer to the northern countries. Unknown

1 A simple brandy, such as Cognac, is lightly distilled and requires no aging. A more complex brandy, such as Armenac, is repeatedly distilled and needs to be aged for at least two years.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_072

to their ancestors, who were simply satisfied with what was produced on their own native soil, it adds vigour and delicacy to the blood and imagination of inhabitants of those countries. Since today in those countries people suffer from unknown illnesses, having frequently consumed foreign foods out of sync with the country's air, for that reason they should have greater heat and subtlety in their blood. While there are new illnesses, or particular infirmities that arise more frequently than before, others have disappeared or become quite rare. I heard Regius,[2] the celebrated doctor from Amsterdam, say that since the uptake of these commodities, of which I have just spoken, it has introduced to his city twenty percent more cases of scurvy than were previously seen among all classes of people.

It is not enough for a country to be a certain distance from the equator for its climate to be appropriate for nourishing men's minds and talents. By its fixed qualities, the air may be contrary to children's physical education, the delicacy of whose organs would one day make them men with great minds. The mix of corpuscles amid the air's composition can be bad by an excess of one of its good principles. Certain countries may have crude emanations from the earth. All these faults that one can imagine seem limitless, and can make a country's air, where the temperature seems the same as its neighbour, less favourable for children's physical education than the air breathed in the other. Two regions equidistant from the pole can have physically different climates. The air in one country, bordering another makes men large, and the air in the other makes them small. So why does it not make people more intelligent in one place than another? It should be more difficult to vary men's height than the quality and order of the brain. The more fluid an organ, the more blood that nourishes it, the easier it can change. But of all the organs of the human body, the most delicate are those that help the intellectual soul perform its functions. What I am saying here is nothing other than common opinion, which has always attributed the difference between people to difference in air quality. "The climate of each people is always, to my mind, the principal cause of the inclinations and customs of men, who are no more different between themselves than air differs from one place to another" [Chardin, vol. 2, p. 4],[3] said a man to whom we can apply the praises that Homer gave to Ulysses: *Qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes*.[4]

2 Du Bos calls this physician 'Regis,' and he likely refers to Henricus Regius (1598–1679), Cartesian philosopher, physician, and professor of medicine. Contrary to what Du Bos indicates, Regius was based in Utrecht.

3 John Chardin, *Voyages of the Gentleman Chardin to Persia and other places in the Orient*.

4 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 142: "He who saw the manners and cities of many men."

CHAPTER 18

That Differences between the Airs of Different Countries Must Be Attributed to the Nature of Emanations from the Earth Which Are Different in Various Regions.

Emanations of the earth are the only apparent cause to which we can attribute the noticeable differences between the properties of air in various regions, equally distant from the equator. This opinion agrees very well with experience. Emanations, on which the properties of air depend, themselves depend on the nature of the body from which they escape. When the air in two countries varies, the composition of the earth is also found to vary. For example, there is more water in a patch of Holland than in the County of Kent. The bowels of the earth do not contain in France the same matter that it usually contains in Italy. In several places in Italy the earth is full of alum, sulfur, bitumen, and other minerals. Where these are found in France, they are not present in the same proportions as they are found in Italy. Nearly everywhere in France the rock is marl or a type of soft, oily, and white stone that contains a lot of volatile salts. Salt is common in the earth of Poland and well-established mines are found in several parts of that kingdom. These mines satisfy the demand of that country and of several neighbouring regions. Scientists attribute the tremendous fertility of the land in Poland and the huge size of its produce to this widespread salt. If it is permitted to extrapolate, it also explains the large number of people born and raised in that country. In England, the rock is mainly composed of lead, pewter, coal, and other minerals that vegetate and continually improve.

The difference in these emanations is, in some manner, detectable by our senses. The colour of the atmosphere, and of clouds on the horizon at sunset and sunrise, depend on the nature of the fumes that fill the air. These fumes mingle with the vapours of which clouds are composed. Everyone can see that the atmosphere and the clouds that glow on the horizon are not the same colour in all countries. In Italy, for example, the atmosphere is a greenish blue, and the clouds on the horizon are yellow and very dark red. In the Low Countries, the atmosphere is pale blue and the clouds on the horizon are only tinted with whitish colours. This difference is even noticeable in the heavens of Titian's pictures and those in the pictures of Rubens. These painters have

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_073

represented nature as it appears in Italy and in the Low Countries, where they copied it. I conclude from what I have said that, just as the properties of the earth favour particular crops in different countries, so the properties of the earth determine the nature of the air of each country. The qualities and properties of the earth are also the cause of the difference between the air of two countries, just as it is the cause of the different flavours of the wines that are vinted in two adjacent appellations.

For in its nature this cause is subject to a lot of vicissitudes as well as to an infinity of alterations. Where earth is a mixture composed of solids and liquids of various types and different species, both must continually act. Thus they must cause continual fermentation, especially since air and central fire put even more matter in motion. The leavens and the mixture and proportions of these leavens are not always the same. Consequently, the fermentations do not always lead to the same results. Thus, the emanations of the earth would not always be the same in the same country. They must be subject to many changes.

Experience lends a lot of support to this reasoning. Does the earth emit every year the same quantity of fumes which are the matter of thunder and lightning? As some countries are more subject to thunder than others, in some years it thunders ten times more often in a country than it does in that country in other years. Barely two thunderclaps were heard in Paris in the summer of 1716. It thundered thirty or more times in the summer of 1717. The same thing happens with earthquakes. Are all years equally rainy in a given country? The records of observatories show the difference between the amount of rain that falls in Paris in the course of a year and the amount that falls in another year. Sometimes twice as much falls. No one would attribute the irregularity that is noticed in the eruptions of volcanoes to any cause other than the irregularity of the continuous fermentations in the bowels of the earth. The mountains issue more fire in some years than in others and they sometimes go a considerable time without erupting. Are all years equally healthy, equally rainy, windy, cold, and hot in a given country?

The sun and the emanations of the earth determine in France, and elsewhere, the temperature of each year. No other cause can intervene, unless the stars are supposed to exert an influence. Of these two causes, the sun's effects do not vary. Thus it is necessary to attribute the immense differences between two years' temperatures in France to variations in the earth's emanations.

I say that the action of the sun does not vary. At Paris it rises and sets at the same height every year. If there is any difference in its elevation, it is only detectable by modern astronomers, and it could only make a difference

between the summers of two years as great as the difference between a summer in Senlis and a summer in Paris.[1] The distance between Paris and Senlis, from south to north, amounts to the height that the sun can have at Paris from one year to the next.

The difference in temperature between years is another variation. In some summers, the heat in Paris is intolerable. Others are barely not cold. Often, it is colder on the summer solstice than it was six weeks earlier. Winter is sometimes very harsh, and the frost lasts forty consecutive days. In other years, winter passes without three consecutive days of frost. In some years, thirty-two inches of rain fall in Paris [See the records of the Observatory]. In other years, only eight. Also, there are years when the winds are more frequent and stronger than others. The same is true of all countries. The temperatures of years always vary. It is only true that in Mediterranean countries, the periods of rain and heat are not as irregular as in our country. Hot spells and rains, short or long, occur there at approximately the same time. There are variations in those countries, but they are not as capricious as in France.

But, some will say, although every year the sun rises to the same height, there could be some obstacle, such as a sunspot, that reduces its power in some years more than in others. The sun would then be responsible for most of the variations whose cause I look for in the bowels of the earth.

I respond that experience does not support the view that the sun is responsible for this variation. There would be a kind of pattern in this irregularity if it came from the deceleration of the action of the sun. I mean, that all countries would feel this irregularity, in proportion to their distance from the equator and the height of the sun would always determine the degree of heat in any given year. A hotter than normal summer in Paris would be a hotter than normal summer in Madrid. A very mild winter in Paris would be even milder than ordinary winter in Madrid. But this is not so. The winter of 1699 to 1700 was very mild in Paris and very harsh in Madrid. Madrid had frost for fifteen consecutive days and Paris did not have frost for two consecutive days. The summer of 1714 was very dry and hot in Paris. It was very rainy and rather cold in Lombardy. The summer solstice is sometimes colder than the equinoxes. The variations of temperature are such that they cannot be attributed to the sun. It is necessary to attribute it to a different cause in each country, that is variations in the earth's fumes. This also makes certain years more subject to illnesses than others.

1 Senlis is a town about 40 kilometers north of Paris.

... ipsa saepe coorta
De terra surgunt.
[Lucret. Bk. 6][2]

Some epidemics issue insensibly from the earth, but some can, as it were, be seen. These are the diseases that break out in places that have had earthquakes. The earth's primary envelope is composed of ordinary soil, stones, pebbles, and sand. Prudent nature has used this to cover the second envelope, composed of minerals and fatty earth whose emanations contribute to the fertility of the exterior soil. These emanations either climb in the stems of plants or else they rise in the air, after having been extenuated and filtered as it traverses the primary envelope of the earth. There they form aerial nitrate that falls on the earth from which it has issued, thus improving its fertility. When earthquakes occur, several locations in this second envelope are exposed, and they are subject to the immediate effects of air and sun. With nothing any longer interposed, molecules are detached in quantities that are too large. Moreover, these molecules are still too coarse, and should not have risen in the air until they had been extenuated by passing through the primary envelope, as through a sieve. Thus the air of the country is infected and remains infected until the exposed land is emptied of its emanations, or until dust driven by the winds has coated it with a new crust.

But, as we have said, some epidemics, so to speak, issue from the bowels of the earth undetectably, without any noticeable change. These are the pestilences that sometimes spread in a country when they have not been carried from elsewhere and are only attributable to changes in the earth's fumes.

2 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 6.1100–1101: "They often gathering together burst from the earth itself."

CHAPTER 19

That We Must Attribute to Variations in the Air in the Same Country the Difference Noted between the Geniuses of Inhabitants of Different Eras.

Based on everything that I have said, I conclude that since we attribute different national characters to different air qualities in their countries, we must in the same way attribute variations that arise in the customs and genius of its inhabitants to changes that occur in the quality of air in certain countries. Just as we attribute the difference between Italians and the French to the difference in their air, we should attribute observable differences between the manners and genius of the French in one era and the French of another era to changes in air quality. In France, air quality varies in certain respects and remains the same in others, so it follows that in every era the French will have a general character that distinguishes them from other nations. But this character does not prevent the French in certain eras from being different from the French in others. Wines in each region, too, always preserve a particular flavour, even though they differ in quality, and in some years they are incomparably better than in others. This is why, for example, Italians are always more likely to succeed in painting and poetry than people living near the Baltic sea. But since the cause that creates national differences is subject to so many changes, it must be the case that certain generations in Italy have greater talent for excelling in these arts than other generations.

"The whole question of the preeminence among the Ancients and the Moderns," says the great defender of the latter [M. de Fontenelle, *Digression on the Ancients*],[1] "being at last well understood, comes down to knowing if the trees were as grand as those of today. I believed," he adds, "that certainty would come from investigating physics, which contains the secret to cutting short disputes that rhetoric drags on forever." Let us consult it, I agree. What does it tell us? Two things. The first is that in all times certain plants attained great perfection in one country rather than another, and that in the same country trees and plants produce fruits that vary in quality from year to year.

1 de Fontenelle, *Une Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*, in *Oeuvres Diverses De M. de Fontenelle* [A Digression on the Ancients and the Moderns, in The Various Works of Mr. de Fontenelle], vol. 3 (Amsterdam, 1771), 127.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_074

One could say about years what Virgil said about regions when he wrote that all of their products are not equally good:

Non omnis fert omnia tellus.[2]

The cause of this reveals a process to which we can an attribute observable difference between the minds and geniuses of nations and eras. Is the effect not already noticeable in the minds of men, due to the difference in a region's temperature, as can be seen in different countries and different years? Does a region's temperature not harm or benefit children's physical education a lot? Why should we not allow that French children in certain years, where the temperature was good, have readier brains than those who were raised in years when the temperature was bad? Do we all not attribute to differences in air the intelligence of Florentines compared to the stupidity of people from Bergamo?

But, someone will object, if changes that you think are happening on the ground, in the air, and in people's minds are real, one would expect to notice some changes in the configuration of people's bodies in the same country. The changes you believe are happening inside should be accompanied by obvious exterior changes.

In the first case, I reply, based on what I have already said, that the powerful cause that affects the brains of every species is not capable of changing the shape of bodies. In the second case, I reply that if we pay careful attention and follow the shape and abilities of bodies in France, for example, perhaps we would find some generations of people stronger and more robust than others at certain times. Perhaps we would find certain periods when the human species either improves and others in which it decays. Is it not tempting to say that this is the case when we see that our soldiers find the weight of their breastplates and helmets an unmanageable burden, compared to their ancestors, who did not find the weight of their garb too heavy? Or compare the exertions sloughed off during the Crusades with the softness of our military camps?

We should not allege that it is the softness of education that enervates bodies. Do today's mothers and fathers pamper their children too much? Or are children of all ages raised by their parents as they are today? Because children are born so delicate, would it only be experience that makes them take the most scrupulous precautions needed to preserve themselves? Is it natural that

2 "The whole world does not make everything equally." Du Bos incorrectly cites Virgil. This quote and thought arises from Nicolaus Vernulaeus' *Institutionum oeconomicarum*, 2.3.3. The line alludes to a portion of the Golden Age prophecy in Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.39: "*omnis feret omnia tellus*" "Every land will bear all fruits."

a father and mother would pay the same attention to their children's physical education that they remembered from their own? It is natural that they judge the delicateness of their children by the delicateness of their own childhood. By teaching us that these cares are not sufficient, experience alone can make us think that it is necessary to give more care and attention to preserve our children than was given for our own preservation. Does the impulse of nature, which we cannot resist, not still love the exercises that strengthen the body of those to whom it has given a stamina capable of undertaking them? Why do most people neglect exercise today? Our softness comes from our lifestyle. Because we are born with weaker stomachs and intestines than our grandparents, each of us in our condition looks for new recipes and more pleasurable food, and the fasting practiced effortlessly by our grandparents is completely impracticable for a third of the world. Why not believe that it is the physical that governs the human? I believe that the type of lifestyle where people wear more or less clothing during certain seasons depends on the ability of the body to withstand cold or heat to greater and lesser degrees, according to their degree of robustness. Fifty years ago, people did not dress as warmly during winter as they do today in France, because their bodies back then were more robust and less sensitive to cold. "I have observed," said Chardin, "in my voyages that just as behaviour follows the temperament of bodies, following what Galen said, the temperament of bodies follows the quality of the climate; so that people's customs or habits are not the effect of pure whimsy but of some natural cause or necessity that is only discovered after careful research" [*Voyage de Perse*, tom. 2, p. 275].[3] When bodies become weaker and more sensitive to injury as a result of the air, it follows that people must change something in their behaviour and customs; the same happens if the climate changes. The bodies' needs also vary with changes to air and climate.

Older people still argue that a certain court was composed of women more beautiful and men better made than those at a court composed of their descendants. If we get into detail about a hundred families at various times, we will find eighty of them where the son is shorter than his father. The human race would become a race of pygmies if times of degeneration were not followed by times of improvement. The weakest and most robust generations alternately succeed one another.

Noticeable differences between the manner and civility of different centuries can only be attributed to the changes that persist in a country's air quality. We have seen times in countries when it was easy to get men to leave home. It

3 Chardin, *Voyages of the Gentleman Chardin to Persia and other places in the Orient*, Vol. 2, p. 275.

was not hard to engage them to go in search of war thousands of leagues from their country, despite the exhaustion of such a long journey, which appears to their soft descendants to be the labours of Hercules. This was because, someone will say, the practice of going to war was widespread. But similar practices are not widespread today. They cannot be introduced without the help of physical conjunctions, so to speak. Do we believe that the most eloquent of preachers who exhorted people to a crusade, today would find a great many noblemen who would follow him *overseas*?

CHAPTER 20

Of the Differences in the Manners and Inclinations of the Very Same People in Different Eras.

Sometimes events make us think that some physical alteration to peoples' constitutions has occurred. These are events in which people, otherwise very polished and even educated, perform the most unnatural actions with frightening ease. This happened in France during the reigns of Charles IX and Henry III. All of the people who play a significant role in the history of Charles IX, and in the history of his brothers, even the clergymen, died violent deaths. The lords of that time, such as Marshal de Saint-André, the Constable de Montmorency, the Prince of Condé, and the Duke de Joyeuse, were killed in battle or assassinated.[1] The fatal blows were struck by people who knew them and wanted to kill them. The names of those who killed them are known. I do not know what destiny gave violent deaths to Henry II, the three kings who were his children, and Henry IV, who reigned successively. This is a misfortune that has not befallen any kings of the third dynasty, even though most of them reigned in difficult times, and people were much coarser than in the 13th century. The 17th century has seen civil wars in France, and parties as embittered and agitated against each other during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, as the factions that followed the Dukes of Guise or Admiral Coligny were in the previous century. Yet the history of the latter conflicts is not so full of the poisonings, assassinations, and tragic events so common in France during the reigns of the final Valois kings.[2]

We should not say that religious motives figured in the civil wars of the Valois era, poisoning minds, and that this motive did not figure in our most recent civil

1 Jacques d'Albon, Seigneur de Saint-André (ca. 1505–1562), French soldier, courtier, diplomat, and Marshal of France. He died at the battle of Dreux. Anne, Duke of Montmorency (1493–1567), French soldier and statesman. He died of wounds incurred at the battle of Saint-Denis. Anne de Batarnay de Joyeuse, Duke of Joyeuse (1560/61–1587), French courtier and soldier. Captured in the Battle of Coutras, he was put to death in revenge for his massacre of 800 Huguenots.

2 In this paragraph, Du Bos is referring to the period of the Wars of Religion in France, which raged from 1562 until 1598. The leaders on the Roman Catholic side included the Dukes of Guise. Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1519–1572) was a leader of the Protestant, or Huguenot party. The Wars ended when Henry IV, first king of the Bourbon dynasty, reneged on his Protestantism and became King.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_075

wars. I would respond that the precept, love thy enemies, was not disputed by Rome or Geneva.[3] It follows that those who sincerely took one side or another ought to abhor assassination. Politics, supported by the spirit of the era, caused all of the evils that befell these people whose entire religion, to use the expression of the time, consisted in a red scarf or a white one. Someone could respond that these evildoers were convinced Roman Catholics or Huguenots, but that they had enflamed brains and rigid imaginations: they were sincere fanatics. But this is my view. Since there were no such people during the most recent civil wars, it is necessary to agree that there are times when men of this sort, who always find enough opportunity for their excesses, are more common at certain times. This shows that minds in the same country can vary in different eras.

In fact, we did not live through rivers of blood over the Arian heresy,[4] which caused so many disputes and so much trouble in Christendom. Prior to Protestantism, several religious disputes arose in France but, with the exception of the war against the Albigensians,[5] these disputes had never caused the French to shed the blood of their brothers. This is because the French did not have the same cruelty in their dispositions or the same vexation in their minds.

Why are there eras when people have an invincible estrangement from all intellectual activity, and are so little disposed to study that all of the ways used to stimulate them long remain unused? Physical labour and the greatest dangers scare them less than concentration. In the 12th and 13th centuries our kings had to offer privileges and rewards to graduates and clergymen to leave off a little of the crassest ignorance into which some unknown fate had plunged them. People then needed such great encouragement to study that some states extended some of the clergy's privileges to those who could read. In fact, great lords usually could not sign their names, or could write them only without knowing the phonetic values of the letters of which they were composed: they copied an example that they had been taught to imitate. On the other hand, it was easy to find people ready to face the greatest dangers, even the longest labours. For a century, people have voluntarily undertaken to study and pursue the liberal arts, though the encouragement to do so is even less

3 Rome stands here for the Papacy and the Church of Rome; Geneva, home of John Calvin, the Protestant theologian, for the Huguenots.

4 Arianism is a Christological position according to which Christ was begotten by God in time and that Christ is distinct from God. It was developed by Arius (ca. 256–336), Christian ascetic and priest. Arius was condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325.

5 Albigensians, or Cathars, was a heretical sect of Christianity that flourished in North Italy and Southern France from the 11th century on. The Albigensian Crusade was a war (1209–1229), sponsored by Pope Innocent III, to eliminate this sect.

than before. Mediocre scholars and people with scant aptitude for the liberal arts have become so common, that some people are so strange that they think that we ought to take as much care to limit the number of people who can study the liberal arts, as we used to take to increase the number. The number of students of the liberal arts, they say, is too great relative to the number of people who practice mechanical arts. The present ratio of those who make a living by mechanical arts to those who make a living by liberal arts is not the ratio most conducive to the good of society. *Ut omnium rerum, sic litterarum quoque intemperantia laboramus* [Senec. *Epist.*].[6]

Finally, why is some country subject to epidemics in some eras while in others it is almost exempt from these diseases, if this difference does not come from differences in the air during these eras? France had four widespread plagues from 1530 until 1636. In the eighty years since then, up until 1718, scarcely any French cities have experienced a slight attack of this scourge. The lazarets of three-quarters of the cities of the Kingdom have not been opened in more than eighty years. Some unknown diseases are born in certain eras and disappear forever after returning two or three times during a certain number of years. Examples from France are the Sickness of the Ardens and the Colic of Poitou.[7]

When we see so many effects so obviously correlated with alterations in the properties of the air, when we recognize so clearly that this alteration is real, and when we even know the cause, we cannot fail to attribute to these alterations apparent difference between people of the same country in different eras. Thus I conclude, using the words of Tacitus, that the world is subject to changes and vicissitudes whose rhythms are unknown. However, the cycles successively bring back civilization and barbarism, talents of the mind and strength of body and, consequently, progress in the arts and sciences, their languishment and decline, as the cycles of the sun bring back the seasons time after time. *Rebus cunctis inest quidam velut orbis, ut quem ad modum temporum vices ita morum vertantur*.[8] This is in accordance with the plan the Creator has chosen, and the means that he has selected for the execution of this plan.

6 Adapted from Seneca, *Epistles* 106.12: "In literature as in all things, we labour in excess." This passage from Seneca was quoted by Pascal, *Pensées*, 363, and Montaigne, *Essays*, 1.19.

7 The *malade des Ardens* was an erysipelatous infection that reached epidemic proportions in, for example, 1129 when it killed 14,000 people in Paris. It ceased after 1374. See, *Dictionnaire des sciences médical*, vol. 30 (Paris: 1818), 106. The *colique de Poitou* struck for the first time in 1572, according to De Thou's *Historia sui temporis*, vol. 6, 537.

8 Tacitus, *Annals* 3.55: "there is in all things a kind of cycle, and there may be moral revolutions just as there are changes of seasons."

CHAPTER 21

The Manner In Which the Reputation of Poets and Painters Is Established.

Before concluding, I am making good on the promise that I made at the start of this work to examine how the reputation of poets and painters is established. What my subject will require me to say on the success of poems and paintings will be a new proof of what I have already said about the most essential and important value of these works.

At first, new works are appreciated by judges of very different sorts: people of the profession and the public. The value of works would be properly assessed, if the public were as capable of defending their own sentiments and adjudicating their value, as it [the public] knew now to issue its verdict. But the public is apt to be confused by people who belong to a profession that produces the new work. These people are likely to make a poor judgement, for reasons I will explain. They obscure the truth in such a way that, for a time, the public remains in uncertainty or error. The public does not know precisely what rank the new work deserves, in general. On the question of whether it should be considered good or bad, the public remains undecided and often believes the people of the trade who tout it, but only for a rather short time.

After this first period of time, the public appreciates the proper value of a work and gives it the rank it deserves, or else they condemn it to oblivion. They are not mistaken in that decision, because they can judge disinterestedly, and they judge it by means of sentiment.

When I say that the public's judgement is disinterested, I am not trying to claim that among the general public we fail to find people whose personal relationships incline them in favour of some authors, and others whose aversion prejudices them against them. But in comparison to disinterested experts, these cases are so few in number that their opinion has hardly any influence on general opinion. A painter, and to a greater extent a poet, someone who is unfailingly a great figure in his own imagination, and who himself is often a man of volatile mental character, for whom indifferent people do not exist, imagines that a large city, or even an entire kingdom, is populated exclusively by people who envy or adore his merit. He imagines that they divide into two equally animated factions, one for, the other against him, just as the Guelphs and Ghibellines were previously for and against the

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_076

emperors.[1] In truth there are no more than fifty people who have taken a decided stand for or against him, or who concern themselves with the success of his poems. Most of those whom the poet thinks hold very settled sentiments of hate or affection are actually indifferent, and are inclined to judge the author by his comedy rather than the comedy by the author. They are as prepared to speak as frankly about their opinion as a house's dinner guests speak about a cook that the master is trying out. In our country. This is not the least fair of our country's judgements.

1 In the 12th and 13th centuries, two factions ruled public sentiment in Italy. The Guelphs supported the Roman Catholic Pope, and the Ghibellines the Holy Roman Emperor. In addition to the complex political history that saw monarchs and popes side with one faction over the other, often leading to military action, the rivalry has been depicted in several literary venues, including Dante's *Inferno* and Boccaccio's *The Decameron*.

CHAPTER 22

That the Public Is, in General, a Good Judge of Poems and Pictures. Of the Sentiment That We Have for Recognizing the Value of These Works.

The public is not only a disinterested judge, but it judges as it must, in general, judge: by means of sentiment and according to the impression that the poem or picture makes on it.[1]

Since the primary goal of poetry and painting is to touch us, poems and paintings are only good works to the degree that they move us and engage us. A work that touches us a lot must be excellent, all things considered. For the same reason, a work that does not touch and does not engage, is worthless. Criticism may find no violations of the rules, but a work can be bad without violating the rules, as a work full of violations of the rules can be an excellent work.

If the work touches, and if it makes on us the impression that it ought to make, sentiment serves much better than all of the dissertations written by critics to explicate the work's merit and calculate its good points and flaws. The route of discussion and analysis, which the critics employ, is truly good, when it is a matter of finding the causes that make a work pleasing or displeasing. But this way is not as valuable as the way of sentiment when it is a matter of answering this question: 'Does the work please, or not?' 'Is the work, on the whole, good or bad?' These amount to the same thing. Thus, reason should not

1 Du Bos was probably influenced here by Cicero, *Orator* 3.195–196: "Nor let any one wonder how the illiterate part of an audience observe these things when they listen to a speech; since, in all other things, as well as in this, the force of nature is great and extraordinary; for all men, by a kind of tacit sense, without any art or reasoning, can form a judgement of what is right and wrong in art and reasoning; and as they do this with regard to pictures, statues, and other works, for understanding which they have less assistance from nature, so they display this faculty much more in criticising words, numbers, and sounds of language, because these powers are inherent in our common senses, nor has nature intended that any person should be utterly destitute of judgement in these particulars. [196] All people are accordingly moved, not only by words artfully arranged, but also by numbers and the sounds of the voice. How few are those that understand the science of numbers and measures! yet if in these the smallest offence be given by an actor, so that any sound is made too short by contraction, or too long by extension, whole theatres burst into exclamations. Does not the same thing also happen with regard to musical notes, that not only whole sets and bands of musicians are turned out by the multitude and the populace for varying one from another, but even single performers for playing out of tune?" Du Bos cites part of this passage below.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_077

affect the verdict that we generally pass on a poem or picture, except to give reasons for the judgement of sentiment and to elucidate the flaws that prevent pleasure and the charms that make it capable of engaging us. If I may say so, reason does not want us to reason about such a question, unless we use reason to justify the verdict that sentiment has reached. The answer to this question is not left to reason. It must submit to the verdict that sentiment pronounces. Sentiment is the competent judge of this issue.

Do we use reason to determine whether a ragout is good or bad? Did you ever, after having applied geometrical principles to the flavour, determine the properties that each of the ingredients contributes, go on to discuss the proportions preserved in their mixture, in order to decide whether the ragout is good? You never have. We have a sense that makes us recognize whether the cook has followed the rules of his art. We taste the ragout and, even without knowing these rules, we know that it is good. It is the same with works of wit and pictures made to please us by touching us.

We have in us a sense intended to judge the value of works that imitate touching objects in nature. This is the same sense that would have judged the object that the painter, poet, or musician has imitated. It is the eye, when it is a question of the colours of a picture. It is the ear, when it is a question of judging whether the sounds of a narrative are touching, or whether they are adapted to the words, and whether the song is melodious. When it is a question of knowing whether the imitation presented by a poem or in the composition of a picture is able to excite compassion and tenderness, it is the same that would have been softened, it is the sense that would have judged the imitated object. This sixth sense is in us without us being able to see its organs. It is the part of ourselves that judges the impression that it feels. To use the words of Plato [*Republ.* Bk 10],[2] it pronounces without consulting a ruler or compass. Finally, it is what is usually called sentiment.

The heart is agitated all on its own, and by a movement that precedes all deliberation, when it is presented with a truly touching object, whether that

2 Plato, *Republic* 10.602c–d: "In heaven's name, then, this business of imitation is concerned with the third remove from truth, is it not? 'Yes.' And now again, to what element in man is its function and potency related? 'Of what are you speaking?' Of this: The same magnitude, I presume, viewed from near and far does not appear equal. 'Why, no.' And the same things appear bent and straight to those who view them in water and out, or concave and convex, owing to similar errors of vision about colours, and there is obviously every confusion of this sort in our souls. … And have not measuring and numbering and weighing proved to be the most gracious aids to prevent the domination in our soul of the apparently greater or less or more or heavier, and to give the control to that which has reckoned and numbered or even weighed?"

object is the product of nature, or the product of art's imitation of nature. This is how our heart is made; it is designed for this. Its operation is prior to reasoning, as the sensations of the eyes and ears are prior to reasoning. It is as rare for people to be born without the sentiment of which I speak as it is rare for them to be born blind. But we cannot give it to those who lack it, any more than we can give them sight or hearing. *Nec magis arte traditur quam gustus aut odor* [Quint. *Inst*. bk. 6. ch. 6].[3] Thus imitations have their effect on us, they make us laugh or cry, they engage us before reason has had the time to act or examine. We cry at a tragedy before having discussed whether the object that the poet presents to us is capable of touching by itself or whether it is well imitated. Sentiment tells us what it is before we have thought to examine it. Instinct, by its first response, makes us sigh when we encounter a mother who has taken her only son to the grave. The same instinct makes us cry when the stage shows us a faithful imitation of a similar event.

We recognize whether the poet has chosen a touching object, and whether he has imitated it well, in the same way that we recognize, without reasoning, whether the painter has depicted a beautiful person or whether the painter who portrays our friend has made a good likeness. Is it necessary, in order to judge whether the portrait is accurate or not, to take the measurements of our friend's face, and compare them to measurements of the portrait? Painters themselves will say that, on seeing an excellent and unfamiliar picture, they have a sudden feeling, prior to all study. The picture makes a sudden impression on them that makes them able, without discussion, to judge its general value. This *first glance* is even enough for them to name the noble painter of the picture.

It is reasonable to say, in ordinary language, that we know everything by means of the mind since here the word 'mind' means the precision and delicacy of sentiment. The French are in the habit of giving the word 'mind' much more incorrect meanings. Thus, Pascal had not thought it through when he wrote that those who judge a work by the rules are, relative to other people, like those who have a watch are relative to those who do not have one when it comes to telling the time [*Pensées diverses*, ch. 31].[4] I believe that this thought is one of those that a little reflection would have made him revise. It is well known that the work of Pascal that I cite is composed of ideas that came to mind and were jotted down on paper. These thoughts were intended for his own study and not publication. They were published after his death in the state that they had been

3 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.5.2: "It can no more be taught by art than taste or a sense of smell."

4 Pascal, *Pensées* Section 1.5. Citation corrected.

left. When it comes to the value of a work intended to touch us, the rules are not the watch. Rather, it is the impression that the work makes on us. The more our sentiment is delicate or, if you like, the more we have wit, the more accurate our watch.

On the basis of this reasoning, Boileau proposes that most professional critics, who substitute knowledge of the rules for acute sentiment (that they often lack), do not judge the value of excellent works as well as minds of the first rank, who judge without having studied the rules as much as the critics. "Permit me to tell you," he said to Perrault, "that today, contrary to what you imagine, Schrevelius, Peraredus, Menagius, and, in the words of Molière, the scholars whose names end in *-ius*, are not the best judges of Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Cicero. Those that I have always seen most struck by reading these great luminaries are minds of the first rank. They are people of the highest standing. If it were necessary to name some, I would perhaps astonish you with the illustrious names that I put on paper. You would find there people like Lamoignon, d'Aguesseau, Troisville, but also people like Condé, Conti, and Turenne."[5]

In fact, ancient poets would be as surprised to learn which passages from their works ordinary modern commentators most decry, as they would be to learn what the Abbé de Marolles[6] and translators of his type make them say sometimes. Are teachers who have, all of their lives, taught logic the best qualified to say when a person speaks good sense, and when he reasons with accuracy?

If the most important quality of poems and paintings were to conform to rules laid down in writing, the best ways of judging their excellence, and the rank that they ought to hold in people's esteem, would be the routes of discussion and analysis. But the most important quality of poems and pictures is to please us. This is the ultimate goal that painters and poets set themselves when they take so much trouble to conform to the rules of their art. Thus, we have enough evidence whether they are successful when we know whether the work touches or does not touch. True, a work that violates essential rules will

5 Boileau, "Lettre à M. Perrault," in *Oeuvres de M. Boileau Despréaux*, vol. 3 (Paris: 1747), 374. The editor of this edition of Boileau's works (Charles Hugues Lefebvre de Saint-Marc) describes Cornelius Schrevelius (Cornelis Schrevel) (1608–1664) as "a man without genius and a critic without discernment." Peraredus, also known as Jean de Peyrarede (d. ca. 1660), a scholar of considerable erudition. Guillaume de Lamoignon (1617–1677), French jurist; Henri François d'Aguesseau (1717–1751), jurist and Chancellor of France; Aegidius Menagius, also known as Gilles Ménage (1613–1692), poet, grammarian, and literary critic; Henri-Joseph de Peyre, Count of Troisville (or Treville) (ca. 1642–1708), soldier and scholar; Du Bos likely refers to Torquato Conti (1591–1636), brutal Italian soldier ennobled by Pope Urban VIII.

6 Michel de Marolles (1600–1881), French clergyman, translator, and collector of prints.

not please. But we better recognize this by judging from the impression that the work makes than by judging this work on the basis of the dissertations of critics, that rarely agree on the importance of each rule. So the public is capable of making good judgements about verse and pictures without knowing the rules of poetry and painting. As Cicero said, *Omnes enim tacito quodam sensu sine ulla arte aut ratione quae sint in artibus ac rationibus recta ac prava diiudicant* [*De Orat*. bk. 3].[7] Everyone, with the assistance of their interior sentiment, recognizes, without knowing the rules, whether works of art are good or bad and whether the reasoning that they hear is conclusive.

Quintilian says, in the work that we have cited so many times, though we have not cited it as often as it deserves, that we do not judge works made to touch and please by means of reason. They are judged by an emotion [*mouvement*] that we do not know how to explain. At least, those who have tried to explain it have not succeeded. *Non ratione aliqua sed motu animi quodam nescio an enarrabili iudicatur neque enim ab ullo satis explicari puto, licet multi temptaverint* [Quint. bk. 6].[8]

The groundlings,[9] without knowing the rules, judge a theatrical piece as well as people of the [theatrical] profession. "In theatre, as in eloquence," wrote the Abbé of Aubignac, "virtues are not less apparent to the ignorant than they are to the learned, though the reason for them is not equally well known."[10]

This is why enlightened artists sometimes consult people who are not familiar with the rules of their arts, but who are nevertheless capable of delivering a verdict on the effect of a work designed to touch people, because they are gifted with a very sensitive nature. Often these gifted people have reached a decision before they have spoken and even before they have thought of rendering a verdict. But as soon as the movements of their hearts, which operate automatically, express, by their gestures and their facial expressions, their verdict, they become, so to speak, a touchstone. They distinctly indicate whether the main quality is lacking or not in the work they are shown or read. Thus, though these people are not capable of contributing to the improvement of a work with their advice, or even giving a systematic reason for their sentiments, their verdict does not cease to be accurate and certain. There are several examples of the sort that I have presented. Malherbe and Molière would even include

7 Cicero, *Orator* 3.195. The quotation is followed by a paraphrase.

8 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.3.6–7 The quotation is paraphrased in the preceding sentences.

9 Groundlings are spectators (or readers) who are unsophisticated and thus uncritical.

10 François-Hédelin abbé d'Aubignac, *La pratique du theatre* (Amsterdam: 1715), 65. François Hédelin (1604–1676), French playwright and clergyman.

their kitchen servants among the people to whom they would read their verses in order discover "if these verses would take," if you will excuse my use of the favourite expression of our dramatic poets.

But, someone will object, certain sorts of works have attractions that the ignorant cannot sense. Consider, for example, a person who does not know that the same Farnace who was allied with the Romans against his father Mithridates was, a few years later, shamefully stripped of his estates by Julius Caesar. Such a person cannot be struck by the beauty of the prophetic verses that Racine makes Mithridates speak as he dies:

> *Tôt ou tard il faudra que Pharnace périsse,*
> *Fiez-vous aux Romains du soin de son supplice*.[11]

Thus, the ignorant do not know how to judge the work in its entirety, since they only recognize some of its beauties.

I ask the reader not to forget the first response I am going to make to this objection. I do not include uneducated people in the public that is capable of judging poems or paintings and determining the degree of their excellence. Here the word 'public' only refers to people who have acquired some education, either by reading or by intercourse with the world. They are the only people who can indicate the rank of poems and pictures, though they recognize in excellent works beauties that even the commonest people will feel and remark on. But since they have no knowledge of other works of the same genre, they are not in a position to determine to what degree the poem that makes them cry is excellent, or the rank that it holds relative to other poems. The public, with which we are concerned here, is limited to people who read, who attend the theatre, who view and hear about pictures, or who have acquired in any way whatsoever the discernment that we call 'comparative taste,' and of which I will soon speak at greater length. The reader, by paying attention to times and places, as well as to the nature of the work in question, will understand much better than I can explain, to what degree of intellect, to what point of education and standing, the public of which I speak will be restricted. For example, not everyone who is able to make a sound judgement about a French tragedy is able to give a similar judgement about the *Aeneid* or any other Latin poem. The public that can, today, judge Homer is even less numerous than the public

11 Racine, *Mithridate*, 5.5.
Sooner or later it will be necessary for Farnace to perish,
Trust the Romans to take care of his torture.

that can judge the *Aeneid*. Thus, the public that judges is restricted, according to the work that is in question.

The public is more or less restricted according to the time and place of which we speak. In some eras and some cities, the knowledge necessary to accurately judge a work by its effect is more common and more widespread than in others. A social class that does not have the required education in a provincial town has it in a capital city. A social class which does not have it at the beginning of the 16th century has it at the end the 17th. For example, since the establishment of opera houses, the public capable of expressing its sentiment on music has increased by three-quarters in Paris. But, as I have already said, I am not afraid that my reader will be mistaken about the appropriate extension to be assigned to the word 'public' on each of the occasions on which I will use it.

My second response to the objection drawn from the verses of *Mithridate* is that the public does not in a single day render judgement on works that truly have value. Before these works are judged, they remain for time, so to speak, on the desk. The public will not understand certain beauties until they are explained, but these beauties are still apparent to the public from the time that a work comes to its attention. An explanation of the verses that contain these beauties will be passed by word of mouth until it reaches the lowest class of the public. This explanation takes the author into account when it gives a general description of the work. People have at least as much desire to say what they know as they have to learn what they do not know. Besides, I do not think that, on the whole, the public misjudges a work even when some of its beauties escape the public. A sensible author, who composes in the vernacular, does not rely on such beauties for the success of his poem. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine do not contain four passages similar to the one from *Mithridate* that we have mentioned. If a piece fails, it would still have failed if the entire public had known about these veiled beauties. Two or three lines to which they did not pay attention, and which they would have enjoyed if they had grasped their meaning, would not have prevented them from being bored by the other 1500 lines, which they perfectly understood.

Since the aim of the poet and painter is to touch and to please, all people who are not stupid must be able to feel the effect of good poetry and good pictures. Thus everyone must have the right to vote when it comes to deciding whether poems or pictures have the effect that they are supposed to have. So, when it is a matter of judging the general effect of a work, the painter and the poet have as little right to challenge those who do not know their arts, as a surgeon would have the right to challenge the testimony of someone who has undergone an operation, when the only question is whether the operation has been painful. That the patient is ignorant of anatomy is irrelevant. What would we think of a

musician, who maintained that those who do not know music, are incapable of deciding whether the minuet he has composed pleases or not? When an orator makes his audience yawn and fall asleep, it is certain that he has spoken badly. We do not dream of asking whether the people put to sleep by his discourse know anything about rhetoric. Some people instinctively know that the merit of an oration, and the merits of a poem or a painting, is a matter for sentiment. These people credit the auditor's report and they adhere to his decision, once they know that he is a sensible person. Even when one of the viewers of a generally panned work gave a poor account of the reasons why it is boring, people would not defer less to the general sentiment. They would not stop believing that the piece is bad, even though he gives a poor explanation of why it is worthless. We believe the person even when we do not understand the reason.

Our general sentiment decides that certain colours are more naturally cheerful than others. Those who claim to give a theoretical explanation of this truth only speak of obscurities that few people believe they understand. However, the fact is regarded as certain in the entire universe. It would be as ridiculous to maintain, in the Indies, that black is a cheerful colour, as to maintain in Paris that light green and pink are sad colours.

True, when it comes to the merits of pictures, the public is not such a competent judge when it comes to the merits of poems. For example, the perfection of one part of the beauty of a picture, the perfection of the design, is more apparent to painters or connoisseurs who study painting as the artists themselves do. But, we will discuss later [Chapter 27] the beauties of a picture that the public can judge without reproach, and the beauties of a picture whose real value cannot be appreciated without knowing the rules of painting.

CHAPTER 23

That Way of Argument Is Not as Good for Knowing the Merit of Poems and Paintings as That of Sentiment.

The more men advance in age, the better their reason becomes. They have less faith in their philosophical reasoning and more confidence in sentiment and practice. Experience has made them realize that one is rarely wrong on the basis of the senses' clear reports, and that the habit of reasoning and judging on the basis of those reports leads to a simple and secure practice. On the other hand, we are always mistaken in thinking philosophically, that is to say, in posing general principles, and drawing from those principles a chain of conclusions. There are a great many principles in the arts, and nothing is easier than to find oneself mistaken in the choice of which principle to put forward as most important. Might this principle not change according to the genre of work on which one wants to work? We might also give a principle a wider application than it should have. We often take something unprecedented to be impossible. The third syllogism is enough to throw us off the right path.[1] The fourth thereby becomes an obvious sophism, and the fifth contains a conclusion in which a fallacy absolves those incapable of analyzing the reasoning and identifying the source of the error. Finally, whether natural or critical philosophers advance bad principles, whether they draw poor conclusions, they always turn out to be mistaken, even though they are convinced that their method infallibly leads to truth.

How often has experience discovered errors in philosophical reasoning that were taken in past ages as incontrovertible reasons? How many times will we

1 Du Bos is referring to Aristotelian syllogistic theory. A syllogism is a deductive argument that consists of two premises and a conclusion. Each sentence in the syllogism consists of a subject-predicate construction (e.g., All A is B). Aristotle demonstrated that there are three syllogistic figures, or arrangements of different types of subject-predicate constructions. Figures one and two are unproblematic, logically speaking. The third figure is more complex, but also relatively unproblematic. However, the fourth figure presents difficulties because the syllogisms are incomplete and require further proof. By the 'fifth' syllogistic figure, Du Bos must be referring to the modal syllogism, which tried to reason using terms such as 'necessarily,' 'possibly,' and 'contingently,' and these were deeply problematic. A fully worked-out theory of the modal syllogism appeared only recently, in Marko Malink, *Aristotle's Modal Syllogistic* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2013).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_078

identify errors in reasoning that today pass themselves off as being founded on incontestable truths? Just as we blame old thinkers for having believed in the horror of the vacuum[2] and the influence of the stars, one day we will disown our own discoveries for being similar sorts of errors that reason will hopelessly try to maintain, but that time and experience will show to be false.

The two most famous philosophical organizations in Europe, the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Royal Society of London, refused to adopt or build a single general system of natural science. Agreeing with the view of Chancellor Bacon,[3] they have not espoused a single one out of fear that having to justify the system should draw attention from onlookers and make them see experiments not as they truly are, but as they should be, in order to give weight to an opinion they try to pass off as true. Our two famous academies rest content to verify facts and publish them in their journals, persuaded that nothing is easier according to reason and that they would stumble if they took two steps beyond what they acquired from experience. These two organizations expect a general system on the basis of first-hand experience. What to think of those systems of poetry which, far from being founded on experience, try point-blank to contradict it and endeavour to demonstrate to us that works admired for two thousand years, by everyone who can hear them, are nothing less than admirable? The more we know ourselves and know the rest of humanity, the less we place our faith in speculative conclusions, as I have already said, even in matters as rigorous as geometric demonstration. Despite reassurances from his driver that he could proceed without flipping his vehicle, even when young, Leibniz[4] would never let his coachman drive down a particular route, despite the fact that geometrical analysis allowed this learned man to know that by

2 The horror of the vacuum is an Aristotelian physical theory, best known by the expression, "Nature abhors a vacuum." In his *Physics* 4.6, he outlined arguments from those who believed and those who denied that a void could exist. In the 17th century, there was a lot of experimental research that set out to undermine this long-held belief by philosophers such as René Descartes and Evangelista Torricelli (1608–1647), Italian scientist best known for inventing the barometer. Torricelli was employed for part of his career by Ferdinando II de' Medici (1610–1670), Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1621 until his death. As Du Bos will explain in Volume 2, chapter 33, Blaise Pascal eventually showed that, in principle, a vacuum is not impossible.

3 Francis Bacon (1561–1626), philosopher and member of the Royal Society. His career was remarkable, having served as a politician and leading scientist. Bacon is considered to be the founder of empiricism. He was at the time and subsequently recognized as the instigator of the early modern scientific method.

4 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), important philosopher and mathematician. His philosophical influence is vast, but his mathematical reputation is also of tremendous significance, having discovered differential and integral calculus. Of the millions of folios on which

the angle and height of the road, as well as by the weight of his vehicle, that the driver would not overturn. One should believe the driver rather than the philosopher, because the philosopher makes more mistakes.

If there is an art that depends on the speculation of philosophers, it is navigation on the open sea. We should ask our navigators, even if they are old pilots who have nothing but their experience, or, if you want, their *rote knowledge*, whether they could provide a better estimate of how the ship actually steers its course in a long voyage than *new-to-sea* mathematicians, who for ten years have studied all sciences pertaining to navigation while seated at their desks. They will respond that, aside from their published articles, they never witnessed mathematicians correcting pilots on their plotted courses. They would refer to the word of the lion in the fable who was asked to take note of a bas-relief[5] in which a man is depicted throwing a lion to the ground, to which the lion replied, "Lions have no sculptors."

When Archduke Albert[6] undertook the famous siege of Ostend, he brought Pompeo Targone from Italy[7] to be his main engineer, the leading man in mathematics in his day, but who lacked on-the-ground experience. But Pompeo Targone did nothing that, from his reputation, Albert might have expected. None of his machines worked and, after he had caused enormous expense and needless blood loss, they were obliged to fire him. Control of the siege was given to the famous Ambrogio Spinola,[8] who had nothing but genius and experience, and he took the position. When he became disgusted by seeing another noble Genovese being preferred over him in the purchase of the Palace of Tursi at

---

his work survives, one finds writings on medicine, geology, linguistics, ethics and theology, alongside metaphysics and epistemology. The anecdote related here refers to his non-empirical, calculative method of inquiry.

5 Du Bos refers to Aesop's fable, *A Lion and a Man Disputing*, Perry Index no. 284.

6 Albert VII, Archduke of Austria (1559–1621), the most short-lived Archduke in Austrian history. He was succeeded by the well-known Archduke Ferdinand II. Archduke Albert began his short reign during a time of war. The siege to which Du Bos refers was a disaster, since Albert was resolutely defeated by Maurice of Orange at the battle of Nieuwpoort (2 July 1600). Having joined military forces with the Spanish, he was compelled to withdraw after losing the siege of Ostend in 1603, which was later won in 1604 by the intervention of General Ambrogio Spinola.

7 Pompeo Targone (1575–ca. 1630), Italian engineer and military engineer. He worked at the papal court in Rome as well as at the Siege of Ostend and the Siege of La Rochelle (1627–1628).

8 Don Ambrogio Spinola Doria (1569–1630), held many titles during his lifetime, including Duke of Sesto and Marquis of the Balbases. Highly regarded even today as a great military commander, he served as general of the Spanish army. Although from Genoa, during his lifetime the Republic of Genoa was protected by the Spanish Empire.

Genoa, this great captain had not studied any of the sciences that train an engineer.[9] As a result, he entered the Spanish army of Flanders at a much older age, relative to when most people begin their training in the art of war.

When the great Prince of Condé took control of Thionville following the battle of Rocroi [In 1643][10] he brought to his camp Roberval,[11] the most knowledgeable mathematician who was, and died as, Royal Professor of mathematics, as a very capable person to give him good advice about the siege he was about to undertake. Roberval made no practical suggestions, so they could only send him to Metz until other engineers could replace him. In Boccalini's books,[12] we read that he knew everything about the great art of political governance written by the most ingenious ancient and modern authors. On this reputation Pope Paul v[13] entrusted him with policing a small city that even someone incapable of understanding Latin could oversee.[14] After three months of administration, the Pope had to remove Boccalini, the author of political commentaries on Tacitus and the famous book *Touchstone*,[15] from his administrative duties.

---

9 Spinola was born to a very wealthy and powerful family in Genoa. But his family found itself at odds with another powerful Genovese family, the Doria. His decision to enter the war as an inexperienced General at the age of thirty-four was prompted by his defeat by the Dorias in a lawsuit over the rights to a palace owned by the Salerno family.

10 The Battle of Rocroi took place in May 1643 and was part of the Thirty Years' War. The French were victorious against the Spanish.

11 Gilles Personne de Roberval (1602–1675), mathematician, who was taught by the great Etienne Pascal and Marin Mersenne. He was the author of "Observations sur la Composition des Mouvements et sur le Moyen de Trouver les Touchantes" [Observations on the composition of movements and on the means of finding the touching ones], published in *Divers Ouvrages de M. de Roberval* [Various Works of Mr. de Roberval] (Paris: 1693). Du Bos' characterization of Roberval as having died professor of mathematics has to do with the peculiarities of the academic chair Roberval held. At the Royal College of France, professors could only retain tenure if they are not outdone by the responses from other mathematicians to the questions they posed. Roberval managed to hang on to that position for forty-two years. Roberval was a contemporary and rival of René Descartes (1596–1650).

12 Trajano Boccalini (1556–1613), Italian writer. According to Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, vol. 3: BA-BOR (Paris: 1820), 496–499, Boccalini's satire *Raggualgli di Parnasso* [Newsheet from Parnassus] was a very popular work, translated into multiple European languages, that took aim at the Spanish court. Rumours that he was assassinated as a consequence of political backlash—repeated by Bayle—cannot be confirmed.

13 Pope Paul v was Camillo Borghese (1550–1621). During is papacy the works of Coperniucus and other modern scientists were condemned.

14 Education during this period was in Latin; hence, even an uneducated person could manage this small city.

15 Boccalini's *Pietra del Paragone* was translated into English by Henry, Earl of Monmouth (1596–1661) as *The Politicke Touchstone* (1674).

At twenty-five, a doctor is as persuaded of the truth of his anatomical reasoning, which tries to discover the manner by which cinchona bark works to alleviate intermittent fevers, as he is by the effectiveness of the remedy. By age sixty, a doctor is persuaded by the truth of a fact that he has seen multiple times, but he does not put any faith in the explanation of the effect of the remedy except *the piling up of examples*, if it is permitted to use that expression. Is it knowledge of simples,[16] of the science of anatomy, in a word, erudition or medical experience that guides an experienced person when choosing his doctor? Speaking of all the French people he has known, King Charles II of England claimed that De Gourville[17] was someone who had the best sense. De Gourville needed a doctor. The most famous sought the job of caring for his health. On a day when the faculty was gathered, he sent a trusted employee to the doors of the medical school with an order to bring him, without further information, one of the doctors whom he judged looked most similar to his master. He brought him what he wished, and he chose well. De Gourville's choice favoured experience, which in this regard deserved the honourific of 'experience' even more.

In speaking of a difficult period he endured, the late De Tournefort, one of the most distinguished members of the Academy of Sciences, said, "For myself, I abandoned myself entirely to the guidance of my horse, and I found it worked better than had I chosen to lead it. An automaton that naturally follows mechanical laws leads itself better on these occasions than the most knowledgeable mechanic, who tries to practice what he learned at his desk, even if he were a member of the Academy of Sciences" [*Voyage from the Levant, Letter II*].[18] According to this author's sentiment, the experience of a horse,

16 The knowledge of simples is learned by herbalists, and commonly medical practitioners, regarding which variety of herbs should be used in a treatment of remedy.

17 Jean Herauld De Gourville (1625–1703), secretary to the writer and nobleman Francois de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), and served generally as a political go-between throughout his life. At the age of 78 he wrote his memoirs, contained in *Mémoires de Monsieur De Gourville, concernant les affaires auxquelles il a été employé par la Cour depuis 1642 jusqu'en 1698* [Memoirs of Mr. De Gourville concerning the business for which he was employed by the Court from 1642 until 1698] (Maastricht: 1782). According to Hannah More, "Hints toward forming the character of a young princess" in *The Works of Hannah More*, vol. 4 (London: 1853), 38: "The Sieur de Gourville. He visited England in the reign of Charles II, who admitted him to his private parties, and took pleasure in his conversation. Availing himself of this favour, Gourville cautioned the king against granting the Catholics any liberty beyond that of toleration, if he wished to keep his throne. Charles had the wisdom to profit by the Frenchman's counsel."

18 Joseph Pitton de Tournefort travelled widely in order to observe and collect plants. The beautifully illustrated work, including letters detailing his many botanical observations,

a machine,[19] is preferable to the reasoning of a man of the Academy. If you permit me the joke: this horse goes a long way.

Lawyers are commonly more knowledgeable than judges. Nevertheless, it is typical for lawyers to make mistakes in their conjectures when issuing a lawsuit. Judges have read only a very small number of books, but their daily experience has shown them the motives behind the decisions of juries in lawsuits, and their predictions about the outcomes of a case are rarely mistaken.

But if there is some matter where reason should fall silent in the face of experience, it is certainly in questions that can be raised regarding the value of a poem. It is when we want to know whether a poem is pleasing or not; if, generally speaking, a poem is an excellent work or just average. The general principles on which we might base ourselves for reasoning about the merit of a poem are few in number. There is often occasion to make some exception to a principle that would otherwise seem the most universal. Many of these principles are so vague that one could equally argue that, in his work, the poet either followed them or not. How important these principles are depends on countless circumstances of the time and place in which the poet was writing. In short, since the main goal of poetry is to please, and due to the diversity of the tastes of those for whom the poems were composed, it is easy to see that these principles become more and more arbitrary than those of other arts. Although these beauties should be less arbitrary in the art of rhetoric than in poetry, nevertheless Quintilian said that he was only subject to a small number of principles and rules, which we can call general principles and universal rules. There are

---

to which Du Bos refers was published posthumously in 1718: *Relation d'un voyage du Levant fait par ordre du Roi* [Account of a voyage from the Levant made on the order of the King] (Amsterdam: 1718).

19 The idea that animals are mechanical derives from René Descartes (1596–1650), the famous philosopher and mathematician who believed that reason was unique to humans (and God). According to Descartes in *Discourse on Method and Related Writings* (1637), trans. Desmond M. Clarke (London; New York: 1999), 40: "I specifically paused to show that, if there were such machines with the organs and shape of a monkey or of some other non-rational animal, we would have no way of discovering that they are not the same as these animals. But if there were machines that resembled our bodies and if they imitated our actions as much as is morally possible, we would always have two very certain means for recognizing that, nonetheless, they are not genuinely human. The first is that they would never be able to use speech, or other signs composed by themselves, as we do to express our thoughts to others. … The second means is that, even if they did many things as well as or, possible, better than anyone of us, they would infallibly fail in others. Thus one would discover that they did not act on the basis of knowledge, but merely as a result of the disposition of their organs."

nearly none, he added, whose validity cannot be challenged by good reasons: *Propter quae mihi semper moris fuit quam minime alligare me ad praecepta quae catholica vocantur, id est, ut dicamus quomodo possumus, universalia vel perpetualia. Raro enim reperitur hoc genus ut non labefactari parte aliqua aut subrui possit* [Bk. *Inst*. ch. 14].[20]

Due to his aim to conform to certain principles, and his failure to pay attention to others, it is nearly impossible to reliably evaluate a poet's fortunate violations of the rules. How many mistakes are generally forgiven due to the beauty of his style? It often happens that, after having reasoned well and come to our own conclusion, we would have concluded badly for others, and they turn out to be precisely the people for whom the poet composed his work. Would the geometrical evaluation of Ariosto's merit made today by a Frenchman be good in comparison to the Italian evaluation in the 16th century? Would the rank that a French *critic* might today give Ariosto, by a geometrical analysis of his poem,[21] be recognized as being what Lodovico deserves? What sheer number of calculations and combinations must someone make before he can draw a correct judgement? Following this method and appreciating a work by this method of examination, a large *folio* volume[22] would scarcely be enough to contain the correct analysis of Racine's *Phaedra*.[23] The discussion would be as subject to error as it would be exhausting to the writer and unpleasant for the reader. What the analysis could not find, sentiment discovers immediately.

The sentiment of which I speak is in all people, but because their eyes and ears are not equally well-trained, they do not have equally perfect sentiment. Some are better than others, either because their sense organs are naturally well attuned or because they have been perfected by frequent use and experience. These people should notice a work's value or lack of it more than others. This is how a clear-sighted man can easily recognize people a hundred feet away,

20 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 2.13.14: "Because of this, it has always been my custom to tie myself down as little as possible to what the Greeks call 'catholic' rules—that is (to translate as well as we can) 'universal' or 'perpetual' rules. Rules are rare indeed that cannot be weakened or subverted in some respect."

21 I.e., a rational appraisal of Ariosto using the geometrical method, as opposed to an appraisal based on sentiment.

22 Folio books were created from large sheets of folded paper and were the most common type of printed book since the start of the printing era during the Renaissance. A typical folio book would measure fifteen inches in height, but others, such as the 'double elephant folio,' could be as large as fifty inches high. The point here is that the book would be very large indeed.

23 *Phèdre* (1677) by Racine is considered great masterpiece.

whereas some have difficulty discerning the colour of the clothing of people right beside them. Were we to believe our intuitions, we would judge the range of other people's senses by our own. This explains why short-sighted people sometimes hesitate to agree with others who have good eyesight, but they are of the same opinion as soon as the short-sighted person advances to a suitable distance.

All the same, everyone who judges by sentiment sooner or later finds himself in agreement regarding the impact and value of a work. In offering an opinion of a poem or painting, if consensus is not established as soon as it seems it should, it is because men do not always allow themselves to say what they feel and to report the impression the work makes on them. Instead of speaking straightforwardly and according to their own *experience*, they often ignore the work's value and decide on the basis of principle. And, like most, if they are not capable of explaining themselves systematically, they muddle their decisions and mess up their judgements. A bit of time puts them in agreement with one another, as with others.

CHAPTER 24

Objection to the Reliability of the Public's Judgements and a Response to This Objection.

I have already mentioned errors that the public has made in all times, and in all countries, concerning the merits of distinguished personages and persons who pursue certain professions. How can you, someone will object, set up in an infallible tribunal an *appreciator* of merit, who has so often been mistaken about generals, ministers, and magistrates, and has so many times been obliged to retract the judgement he has issued?

I will make two responses to this objection, which seems to have more substance than it does. In the first place, the public is rarely mistaken in giving a general verdict on the persons who exemplify these injustices. Though, sometimes the public wrongly praises or blames them for some particular occasion. Let us explain this proposition. The public does not judge a general's merit on the basis of a single campaign, a minister's on the basis of a single negotiation, or a doctor's, if you like, on the basis of the treatment of a single illness. It judges on the basis of several occasions and several successes. It would be unfair to judge the merits of those, with whom we are concerned, on the basis of a single success, but it seems to me to be fair to judge them on several successes. It is also fair to judge them in comparison to people who have undertaken enterprises or activities similar to those undertaken by the people with whom we are concerned here.

A lucky success, and even two, can be the result of some chance conjunctions. Rarely does good fortune bring three lucky successes. When these successes reach a certain number, it would be foolish to hold that they are the result of chance and that the ability of the general or the minister did not play a role. Lack of success is the same. A backgammon player who wins nineteen games out of twenty against some opponent, certainly knows the game better, though the luck of the dice may make a poor player win two games in a row against a strong player. The military and the other professions that we have mentioned depend even less on fortune than backgammon, though fortune plays a role in the success of those who profess them. The plan that the general proposes, having examined his forces, his resources, in a word, his means, and those of the enemy, is not likely to be confounded as often as the scheme of the gamer. Thus, the public is not wrong to think that the general, nearly all of whose campaigns are successful, is a great soldier. Though, a general could

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_079

have a lucky victory that he does not deserve, or he could lose a battle or raise a siege without being a bad captain. Cardinal Mazarin,[1] knew as well as anyone, what part ability plays on these occasions, that uninformed people believe to depend entirely on chance because they depend on it in part. Mazarin would only entrust armies and affairs of state to lucky individuals, believing that no one succeeds often enough to be called lucky without having a lot of ability. Now, the public hardly ever retracts the general judgements that it has given, in the manner that I have described, on the merits of captains and ministers.

My second response to the objection, that the judgements of the public are unreliable, is this: it would be wrong to conclude that the public can be mistaken about a poem or a picture from the fact that they often, on the basis a given occasion, wrongly praise or blame ministers and generals. For example, the public is not always mistaken about the praise or blame owed to a general who wins or loses a battle. They err when passing a judgement on a whole of which they understand only a part. When they are wrong, they have praised or blamed before learning about the general's role in the good or bad outcome. The public has judged when it is still poorly informed about the facts. It has judged the general before being fully informed about the constraints he was under from the orders of his prince or republic, from the betrayals of those who were supposed to assist him, and from assistance promised but not provided. The public does not know whether the general is responsible for the chance that seems to be the sole cause of his success, either by closing with the enemy, or by giving him the opportunity to fall into a reckless confidence. Nor does the public know whether the advantage that he has taken of this chance is not due to the precautions his foresight led him to take in advance. The public does not know whether the victory is the result of the general's plan, or whether it is due to the presence of mind of a subordinate officer. The same is true of the public when it praises or blames a minister, a magistrate, and even a physician on a particular occasion.

It is not the same when the public praises painters and poets because the success of these artists is not due to fortune or misfortune but rather due to their merit. When the public decides about these works, it bases its judgement on knowledge of a subject that it knows in its entirety, and all of whose aspects it sees. All of the beauties and imperfections of these sorts of works are before the eyes of the public. Nothing that should make them praise or blame a work is hidden from them. They know everything they need to know in order to pass

1 Jules Raymond Mazarin (1602–1661), Italian-born cardinal and statesman; Louis XIII's prime minister from 1642 on.

judgement. The prince who has given a general his commission, or a minister his instructions, is not as capable of judging their conduct as the public is capable of judging poems and paintings.

Someone will continue to object that painters and poets are, at least, the most unfortunate of all those whose works are set before the public. Everyone is in a position to bring charges against them, without giving any reason for doing so. Other learned people are *only judged by their peers*, who must follow due process before issuing a guilty verdict.

I do not think that being judged by their peers is such a great boon for painters and poets. But let us respond more seriously. When a work treats science or purely theoretical matters, its merit is not a matter for sentiment. Thus, those who have acquired the knowledge necessary to recognize whether the work is good or bad are the only ones who can judge it. People are not born with a knowledge of astronomy and physics as they are born with sentiment. They only know how to judge the merits of a work of physics or astronomy in virtue of their acquired knowledge. In contrast, they can judge verses and pictures in virtue of their natural discernment. Thus, geometricians, physicians, and theologians, or those who are familiar with these disciplines without having hung out a shingle, are the only ones who can judge a work of their discipline. But everyone can judge verses and pictures because everyone is sensitive, and the effects of verses and pictures is a matter of sentiment.

Though this response is irrefutable, I will still offer another reflection to strengthen it. As soon as the sciences, of which I have spoken, have proceeded in accordance with their principles and produced something useful or pleasant to mankind, we can recognize when it has succeeded without any other insight besides that of sentiment. Those ignorant of astronomy know as well as the intellectual whether the astronomer has accurately predicted an eclipse or whether a machine has the effect promised by the mathematician. This is so even though the non-specialists cannot systematically prove that the astronomer or the mathematician has erred, or say where they are mistaken.

Painting and poetry are matters for sentiment, if any arts are. Their only function is to touch us. The only exceptions that can be alleged are pictures and paintings whose merit is not only a matter for sentiment. We do not know by means of sentiment whether a history painting that represents a siege or a consecration ceremony is accurate. Sentiment alone does not tell us whether the author of a didactic poem reasons correctly or whether he successfully proves his position.

Sentiment does not know how to judge the merit of a poem or painting that we can call its extraneous merit. But this is because the [arts of] painting and poetry are unable to determine it. Here, painters and poets have no advantage

over other people. If painters and poets are capable of judging what we have called extraneous merit in poems and paintings, this is because they have other expertise besides those that the arts of painting and poetry can provide.

When we are concerned with a mixed work, that answers to different courts, each of them judges the question on which it is competent. Sometimes this gives rise to opposed, but nevertheless fair, judgements about the value of the same work. Thus, poets praise with good reason Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* as the work of a great artist, while philosophers condemn it as a book full of bad reasoning. Similarly, historians blame Varillas[2] because he errs on every page, while readers who seek only amusement from a book praise him on account of his amusing narratives and agreeable style.

But to return to Lucretius, the public judges the poetic merit of his poem as well as poets do. All of this part of the merit of Lucretius is a matter for sentiment.

Thus, the true means of knowing the merit of a poem will always be to consult the impression that it makes. Our era is too enlightened and, if you like, too philosophical, to believe that it must learn from critics what it must think about a work designed to touch, when we can read the work, and when the world is full of people who have read it. Philosophy teaches us to judge things by their appropriate principles, teaching at the same time that, in order to know the value and excellence of a poem, it is necessary to determine whether it pleases, and the degree to which it pleases and engages those who read it.

Truly, people who are unfamiliar with art are not capable of revealing the causes that make a bad poem boring. They will not be able to itemize the particular faults. So I do not hold that ignorant people can say precisely where a painter or poet has failed. Even less can they give any advice on correcting each failing. But this does not mean that ignorant people cannot judge, on the basis of the impression made by a work designed to please and engage them, whether the author has succeeded in his enterprise, and to what extent he has succeeded. Thus, ignorant people can say that the work is good, or that it is worthless. It is even false that they cannot give a reason for their judgement. The tragic poet, he will say, has not made him cry, and the comic poet has not made him laugh. He holds that he does not feel any pleasure in viewing the picture that he refuses to admire. It is up to the works themselves to defend themselves against such criticisms. Anything that an author can say to excuse

2 Antoine Varillas (1624–1696), French historian. He is best known today as the author of *Histoire de l'heresie de Viclef, Iean Hus, et Jerome de Prague: avec celle des guerres de Bohéme qui en ont esté les suites* [History of the Heresy of Viclef, Iean Hus and Jerome of Prague: with regard to the Bohemian wars which were the result] (Paris, 1682), a book on the history of heresy.

the weak passages of his poem has no more effect than the studied praises of his friends have on the lovely passages. Scudéry's *L'Amour tyrannique* remains a bad piece of work, despite the essay of Sarasin.[3] In fact, all of the reasoning of critics cannot persuade that a work pleases us, when we do not feel that it does, just as they cannot ever make us believe that a work that engages us does not.

3 Georges de Scudéry (1601–1667), French poet and playwright. He was a critic of Corneille and his play *L'Amour tyrannique* [Tyrannical love] (1640) was put forward as an alternative to him. In his *Discours de la tragédie* [Discourse on tragedy] (1639), Jean-François Sarasin (1614–1654) took the side of Scudéry in his dispute with Corneille.

CHAPTER 25

The Judgement of People in the Trade.

After having spoken about the public's judgements of a new work, it is appropriate to speak of the judgements of people in the trade. Taken in general, there are three reasons most people judge works badly. First, the sensibility of people in the trade gets worn out. Second, they judge everything by debate. And third, they are biased in favour of one part of art or another, and generally in their judgements they place a higher value on art than it is worth. Under the name 'people of the trade,' I understand here not just people who write or paint, but also a large number of those who write about poems and paintings [i.e., art critics]. What a paradox, someone will say, that the more ignorant of poetry and painting a person is, the more capable he is of making good judgements about them! Combined with what I have already said, the explication of my position will clearly protect me against an objection that is likely to prejudice people, to the detriment of my opinion.

There are some artists that are more capable than regular people of making good judgements about works of art. These are artists born with genius for their art, always accompanied by exquisite sentiment, compared to that of regular people. But only a few artists are born with genius, and consequently with that superior sensibility or delicacy of sense organs than others have. I maintain that artists without genius judge less well than regular people and, if you want, less well than the ignorant, and here are my reasons. In an artist without genius, sensibility eventually wears off, and what he learns in the practice of his art more often helps to deprive him of natural taste and incline him to wrong decisions. The need to work on poems and paintings dulled his sentiment, even more so because, despite himself, he was often required to write or paint in moments when he felt no desire to work. He became insensitive to the emotional impact of the poems and paintings, which no longer had the same effect on him as they previously did, and as they do to other men of his age.

It is the same with an old doctor. Born caring and compassionate, he is no longer moved by seeing a dying man, even though he is another human being, and even though one day it will be him. It is as if he had never practiced medicine. A pathologist becomes hardened in the same way, and he acquires the habit of dissecting those miserable bodies, who died in horrific ways, without disgust. Gloomy ceremonies no longer make funeral directors cry. If I am allowed to use the expression that helped Cicero to depict, in a

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_080

most lively fashion, the indifference of the Republic: as do hands and feet, the heart develops a callus.[1]

Besides, painters and poets deal with imitations as work, whereas others consider them interesting objects. The subject of the imitation, that is, the tragedy's events and the painting's expressions, barely make an impression on painters and poets lacking genius, of whom I speak. They are used to being so little affected that they barely detect whether the work moves them or not. Their entire attention is fixed on technical execution, and it is by that they judge the whole work. The artistry of Coypel's painting representing the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter does not affect them at all,[2] and they examine it with as much indifference as if it depicted a peasants' dance, or something else incapable of moving us. Insensitive to the emotional impact of these expressions, they do their thing by merely consulting the rule and compass, as if a painting should not contain beauties superior to those beauties judged by those objective instruments.

This is how most of our poets would have examined *El Cid*, if that piece had just debuted. Without enthusiasm, not feeling what others do, and carrying on their complaints in debate, painters and poets regularly commend or blame a work on the basis of their analysis. How can they be good judges of anything when they are terrible judges of the part of *creativity* responsible for giving value to works of art, distinguishing a great man from a simple artist?

In general, people of the trade judge poorly. Although their reasons are often found to be sound, when examined one by one, they put them to use for the wrong reasons. Wanting to judge a poem or painting by discussing it is like measuring a circle with a ruler. One should use a compass, the best instrument for measuring it.

Indeed, we always see people who judge very soundly, if they judge a work by means of sentiment, make mistakes in deciding on the success of a drama, when they made the pronunciation on the basis of debate. As artists, Racine

1 Du Bos is possibly referring to Cicero, *De Domo Sua* [On his House] 36.97: "*eamque animi duritiam, sicut corporis, quod cum uritur, non sentit*" [that hardness of the mind, just like the body's, which does not feel when it burns].

2 Jephthah is one of the judges written about in the *Book of Judges*. The story of his sacrifice of his daughter is considered to be controversial. It was allegedly performed after Jephthah made a rash promise to God. Christian commentators and Church Fathers give various interpretations of this story, most of which find some way to moralize for the good this heinous act. Jewish scholars have tried to minimize the horror of the story by reading Jephthah's daughter's death metaphorically. Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694–1752) was a Parisian painter and playwright, and the son of Antoine Coypel (1661–1722).

and Boileau were, more than others, capable of judging verses and poems. After having exchanged thoughts, who will not believe that their judgements must have been infallible, at least regarding the success of each scene taken in particular? And yet Boileau acknowledged that he and his friend often arrived at judgements, derived from methodical debate, on the varying success of different scenes in his friend's tragedies, only to have been contradicted by the performance. After such an experience they realized that the public had reason to judge differently than they did. To foresee with more certainty the effect of their verses, both of them arrived at a method closer to that of Malherbe and Molière.[3]

We have alleged that people of the trade are prone to another error when forming a verdict. In the general appreciation of a work, they have too much regard for an artist's capacity when they are familiar with that part of art. The fate of artists without genius is mainly to focus on the narrow part of the art they practice, and subsequently to think they have made progress, and to think that it is the only very important part of the art. The poet whose chief talent is for elaborate rhyming finds himself immediately prejudiced against all poems whose rhymes are neglected. He considers it mediocre, even though it is filled with inventiveness and thoughts that go so perfectly together with the subject that one is surprised that they should be so new. Since his talent is not for invention, these beauties weigh very little in his assessment. A painter who, of all the talents required to become a great artist, is merely a colourist, decides the excellence or failure of a painting based on whether the craftsman knew how to apply colour. The artistry of the painting counts for little, indeed for nothing, in his judgement. He makes his decision without any regard for the parts of art he lacks. A poetic painter falls into the same error, ranking lower than average the painting that lacks order and whose expressions are poor, but whose colouring ought to be admired. By supposing that the parts of the art he lacks, merit practically no attention, he maintains, without being obliged to say so, that he lacks nothing to be a great master. We can say of these artists what Petronius said of very rich men: *Nihil volunt inter homines melius credi, quam quod ipsi*

3 Malherbe's stylistic rules were "only loosely codified during his lifetime, but were passed on to followers like Racan and Maynard and eventually institutionalized by the Academy and by later theorists such as Vaugelas and the abbé d'Aubignac". See James, F. Gaines (ed.), *The Molière Encyclopedia* (Westport, Connecticut: 2002), 300–301. Molière followed Malherbe's insistence on not following Renaissance trends toward Greek and Roman neologizing, although he stopped short of the purification of language, Malherbe advocated by including "the commoners' vocabulary, even bringing in coarse and everyday language when necessary to the essence of his scenes" (ibid.).

tenent.[4] Everyone wants the type of merit they are due to be the most important in society. The reader will observe that everything that I said here has to do with general judgements about a work that people of the trade make. No one doubts that painters are more capable than others at judging the merit of a painting by its colours, by the regularity of the design, and by other beauties in its execution; I will say more on this in Chapter Twenty-seven of this volume.

Obviously here I have spoken only about painters and poets who make good faith mistakes. If I sought to make their decisions suspect, I could speak volumes on the injustices they commit daily and deliberately in characterizing the works of their peers. In other professions, one is usually content to be the first among one's contemporaries. In poetry, as in painting, one can barely suffer a hint of equality. Caesar may have been content to have an equal, but most painters and poets, as haughty as Pompey, cannot bear to be rivaled. They desire that the public acknowledge a huge difference between them and the contemporaries that nip at their heels. *Nam neque Pompeius* [*ut primum ad rem publicam adgressus est,*] *parem animo quemquam tulit, et in quibus rebus primus esse debebat, solue esse cupiebat* [Patercul. *Hist*. Bk. 2].[5] It is thus rare that the greatest men in these two professions should want to be fair to their contemporaries, who have only begun their careers, and who could not be their equals for some time. We have often had reason to accuse those famous people of whom I speak of *amour propre*, the trait for which Augustus was accused: that is, for having chosen in the person of Tiberius a successor he believed most appropriate to make him regret it.[6] If great artists are subject to jealousy, what should we think of average ones?

4 Petronius, *Satyricon* 84: "They do not want anything to be considered better than what is in their own hands."

5 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 2.33.3: "In fact Pompey, [from the time when he first took part in public life,] could not brook an equal in mind. In undertakings in which he should have been merely the first he wished to be the only one."

6 Tiberius Claudius Nero (42 BC–AD 37), Roman emperor. This is likely an allusion to Tacitus' account of the succession. Recounting discourse at the time he says in *Annals* 1.10: "Even in the adoption of Tiberius to succeed him, his [Augustus'] motive had been neither personal affection nor regard for the state: he had read the pride and cruelty of his heart, and had sought to heighten his own glory by the vilest of contrasts. For Augustus, a few years earlier, when requesting the Fathers to renew the grant of the tribunician power to Tiberius, had in the course of the speech, complimentary as it was, let fall a few remarks on his demeanour, dress, and habits which were offered as an apology and designed for reproaches."

CHAPTER 26

That the Judgements of the Public Prevail in the End over the Judgements of People of the Trade.

Experience confirms my line of reasoning. People in the trade must often be mistaken since their judgements are normally reversed by those of the public, whose verdicts always determine the fate of works. The view of the public always triumphs when the masters of some art and the public have different opinions about a new work. "A work," wrote Boileau, "may be approved by a small number of connoisseurs, [but] if it is not well-endowed with a certain charm that pleases the taste of ordinary people, it will never pass for a good work and the connoisseurs must admit that they were mistaken in giving it their approval" [Preface of the 1701 edition].[1] The same thing happens when the public approves of a work condemned by connoisseurs. The public to come, if I am permitted this expression, will judge on the basis of its sentiments, as the contemporary public does, and so it will agree with the opinion of the contemporary public. Posterity has never condemned as bad poems those that contemporaries of the author have praised as excellent. Posterity may, however, forego reading these poems in order to read other, better works. Poems that bored contemporaries of the poet never attain a high reputation. Tantum de quoque posteros credere, quantum praesens aetas spopondisset [Curtius, bk. 8].[2]

Partisan books and poems about current events only have a passing fashionableness when they owe all of their success to the circumstances under which they were published. They are forgotten after six months, because the public regards them less as good poems than as newspapers. It is not surprising that posterity ranks them with satirical memoires, which engage only in virtue of the facts they relate. The public condemns them to this fate six months after their appearance. But some of these poems, the partisan writings, for which the public still makes a case a year after their publication, independently of circumstances, pass down to posterity. We still make the case for the satires of

1 Boileau, *Oeuvres diverses*.

2 Quintus Curtius, *Histories of Alexander the Great* 8.5.11: "future generations believed only so much about each man as his own time had vouched for."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_081

Seneca against the Emperor Claudius, that could be made in Rome, two years after the death of that prince. Today we make even more of a case for Menippean satires,[3] *Lettres provinciales*,[4] and some other books of this genre, than was made a year after their first publication. Songs composed ten years ago, that we recall, will be sung by posterity.

The flaws that people of the profession persist in finding in works esteemed by the public, hinder their success, but do not prevent it. We respond to the people of the profession that a poem can have bad points but be an excellent work. It would be pointless to explain to the reader that here, as elsewhere in this dissertation, the word 'bad' is understood relatively. We know very well, for example, that if we say that the colours in a picture of the Roman school are worthless, this expression signifies only that the colours are very inferior to those of several other paintings, either Flemish or Lombard, whose reputation is, however, mediocre. A poem with absolutely bad versification, each line of which offended us, could never be touching. For, as Quintilian said, sentences that begin by hurting the ear by striking it too roughly, sentences that, so to speak, present themselves with poor grace, find the door to the heart closed. *Nihil intrare potest in adfectus quod in aure velut quodam vestibulo statim offendit* [Quint. *Inst.* bk. 9].[5]

The decisions of people of the profession, though subject to all of the illusions of which we have spoken, contribute a lot to the initial reputation of a new work. In the first place, even if they cannot make people who are familiar with a work condemn it, they can prevent a lot of people from becoming familiar, by deterring them from going to see it or reading it. The obstacles that they set up in society have an effect for a time. In the second place, the public, predisposed in favour of the discernment of people of the profession, think that they occasionally have a better perspective. The professionals want to do justice to a work, so that it receives its due reputation, good or bad. But the contrary happens when they do not render their judgement, either through prevarication or a good faith error. When the people of the profession part company with each other, they lose their credit and the public judges on its own.

3 A form of prose satire that satirizes certain attitudes and character traits. The form is named for Menippus (fl. 3rd century BC), Greek parodist. Juvenal is a well-known author of Menippean satires.

4 Du Bos refers to *Lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites sur le sujet de la morale et de la politique de ces Pères* (1656–1657). This work by Pascal, published pseudonymously, is a defence of the Jansenism of Antoine Arnauld against the attacks of Jesuits.

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.10. Du Bos paraphrases before the quotation.

Molière and Racine so quickly established their great reputations as a result of this sort of division.

Though people of the profession cannot impose on other people enough to make them judge to be bad things that are excellent, they can make the public believe that excellent things are mediocre compared to others. Thus, it takes a long time to dispel the error into which people of the profession throw the public. Until a work is generally known, the prejudice that judgement of people of the profession has spread in society counterbalances the sentiments of disinterested people of taste, especially if the work is by an author whose reputation is not well established. If an author is already known to be an excellent artist, his work is very soon freed from any stigma. While prejudice struggles with another prejudice, the truth escapes, so to speak, from their hands. The truth will out.

Some people who speak about a poem or a picture as others do, follow the advice of people of the profession, which they love to repeat, rather than repeating the sentiments of people who have not put out a shingle of the art in question. This is the worse effect of the prejudices that painters and poets foment against a new work in society. In cases of this sort, where people do not believe that they have an essential interest in choosing the right side, they let themselves be dazzled by a reason that affects them a lot. The reason is that people should have more experience. I say dazzled because, as I have shown, painters and poets do not judge by means of sentiment, nor by deferring to natural taste, perfected by comparison and experience. Rather, they judge by means of analysis. They do not judge as people endowed with the sixth sense, of which I have spoken, but as armchair philosophers. Vanity contributes to us adopting the views of people of the profession rather than the opinions of people of taste and sentiment. Following the opinion of a person who has the same experience as we do, and who has learned nothing that we do not know, is to recognize in some fashion that he is smarter than us. We pay a kind of homage to his natural discernment. But to believe the artist, to defer to the opinion of a person who pursues a profession that we have not practiced, is only to defer to the art; it is to render homage to experience. The profession of the art imposes in this way on a lot of people so that they stifle, at least for a time, their own sentiment in order to adopt the opinion of the people of the profession. They blush to dare to be of a different opinion. *Pudet enim dissentire, et velut tacita quadam verecundia inhibemur plus nobis credere* [Quint. bk. 10. Ch. 1].[6] Thus

6 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.18: "We are ashamed to disagree, and our unconscious modesty inhibits us from putting more trust in ourselves than in others."

we will listen with approval to people of the profession, as they methodically examine a tragedy or a picture, and we try to retain as much as we can of the technical vocabulary. We do this to be admired or, at least, heard by others.

CHAPTER 27

That We Should Give Greater Regard to the Judgements of Painters Than to Those of Poets. Of the Art of Recognizing the Hand of Painters.

The public is more wary of painters who critique painting than poets who critique poems. We can only commend the public for placing their confidence this way. The general public claims to have more knowledge of painting technique than poetic technique, and as we have explained at the start of these essays, the beauties are much more important in a painting than they could ever be in a French poem. We have seen that beauties of execution are sufficient to produce a precious painting. These beauties succeed in becoming obvious to men ignorant of painting technique but, because they are ignorant, these men are unable to judge a painter's merit. To judge how much praise a painter deserves, one needs to know how close he came to other successful artists who are the most celebrated for having excelled in the parts where he himself succeeded. Just a few degrees separate a great man from an ordinary craftsman. This is what people of the profession know. Whether he has the talent for success in *chiaroscuro* or local colouring, the painter's reputation depends more on the judgement of his peers than on the reputation of a person whose merit stems from expressing passions in poetic inventions, things which the public understands, compares, and judges for itself. The history of painters shows us that colourists arrive at a great reputation much later than painters celebrated for their artistry.

Following this principle, I should recognize people of the profession as being judges when we want to know, to the extent that it is possible, who made the painting; but they are not for that reason the unique judges of a painting's value. Since great craftsmen have sometimes made average paintings, we cannot infer the excellence of a painting from knowledge of its author. Whether a painting should be considered first class cannot be decided on the basis of having determined it is a painting by a very famous painter.

Although experience teaches us that, after medicine, the art of guessing a painting's author by recognizing the master's hand is the most faulty of all arts, it nevertheless prejudices the public in favour of the decisions of those who practice it, even when those decisions are based on other facts. Men who are more likely to admire than to approve listen in submission, and confidently repeat all the judgements of a person who displays special knowledge of many

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_082

things, of which they understand nothing. From what I will say about the infallibility of the art of discerning the hands of great masters, the restrictions that need to be placed on our natural inclination towards judgements given by those who make a career out of that art will become clear. These are people who make their claims with as much confidence as a young doctor making prescriptions.

Experts in the art of recognizing the hands of great masters are not really in agreement among themselves, except about the famous paintings which, so to speak, have already made their fortune and everyone knows their history. For paintings whose status is not already fixed by a constant, uninterrupted tradition, only their authors and their friends might know the name under which it emerged into the world. Paintings owned by others, and most of all by fellow citizens, are of dubious origin. Some of these are accused of being copies, others of being pastiches. Interest adds to uncertainty in the decision about a given piece of art, which can mislead even when done in good faith.

We know that many painters are mistaken about their own works, and sometimes they have mistaken a copy for the original that they themselves painted. As an eyewitness account, Vasari recounts that Giulio Romano, after having painted the drapery in a painting by Raphael, mistook a copy of the painting made by Andrea del Sarto for the original.[1] Indeed, although it should be easier today to recognize a man's pen than his paintbrush, nevertheless experts on writing make mistakes. Their opinions are divided all the time.

The particular shape that each man forms the twenty-four letters of the alphabet,[2] the liaisons between these characters, the shape of the lines, their spacing, the degree of control over the acceleration of his pen in the heat of movement, as happens to nearly all who write, which explains why the first lines are formed more precisely than others, and finally the manner by which they hold the pen: all of this, I say, makes us better prepared to distinguish between writings than the strokes of a paintbrush. Requiring a rapid and continuous movement throughout all parts of the hand, writing depends entirely

1 This Italian painter's nickname was '*Andrea sensa errori*' (Andrea without errors). Ottaviano de'Medici was the owner of the Raphael original *Pope Leo x*, but when he was asked to give the painting to the Duke of Mantua, Andrea was commissioned to make a copy. According to Vasari's testimony, Giulio Romano was fooled by the copy, and recognized it as such only after Vasari pointed it out, as he explained in his *Lives of the Artists*. The story is more remarkable when we note that Romano was Raphael's own student.

2 If Du Bos is referring to the French alphabet, it is curious that he mentions twenty-four, rather than the twenty-five letters it had at that time. The letter 'K' had not yet been added, but the 'W' had been added by the time he is writing.

on the hands' formation and practice. A strained character is quickly suspected of being counterfeit, and we can easily tell if a character is freely drawn or if it is what is called *traced*.

We cannot in the like manner tell whether some brushstrokes are studied, and we cannot so easily sort out whether the copier has retouched and amended his stroke to his work to make it more similar to the work of another painter. In painting, one has the right to go over one's work many times, finally rendering it as it is in the original. The painter has as much right as the ancients when they rewrote their letters on wax tablets. The ancients were so convinced of the possibility of counterfeiting the writing on their tablets, because they could retouch the letters without making it seem so, that no public deed was deemed valid until all parties applied their seals to the contract. They took great care in having unique counterfeit-proof seals, which is why we find such perfection in the art of engraving stones that served as seals in their day. The ancients' care to make each one distinct is why we find such particular and extravagant engravings on the stones, sometimes even depicting the owner of the seal's head.

But notwithstanding all the means that our experts have for discerning our writings, their art is still so unreliable that nations more concerned to protect the innocent than to punish the crime, forbid their courts to use handwriting analyses as evidence; and in countries where that evidence is given, as a last resort judges regard them more as an indication than as solid evidence. What should we think of the art that stubbornly claims that it is not possible to counterfeit the touch of Raphael or Poussin, other than it can be mistaken?

CHAPTER 28

Of Times When the Values of Poems and Paintings Are Correctly Appreciated.

Finally, times arrive when the public appreciates a work, no longer on the basis of the reports of people of the profession, but according to the impression the work makes. The people who had judged it differently than people of the profession, and by referring to sentiment, communicate their opinion to others, and the uniformity of their sentiments changes everyone's opinion. New art experts emerge, who judge calumniated works fairly and without prejudice. These experts systematically disabuse society of the prejudices that their predecessors had sown. Everyone notices that those who had promised something better than the work whose value has been disputed, have not kept their word. On the other hand, the obstinate contrarians die out. Thus, the work is widely ranked at its true value.

Such has been the fate of Quinault's operas. It was impossible to persuade the public that they were not touched by the portrayals of Theseus in *Atys*, but they were led to believe that these tragedies were full of egregious flaws that were the result of the poet's lack of talent, rather than the poem's inherent badness. People held that it was easy to do much better than Quinault. If one found something good in his operas, it was not permitted, on pain of being regarded as a mediocre thinker, to praise the author too much. Thus, those who were pleased on some occasions by Quinault did not dare to maintain that he was an excellent poet in his genre. But the public's sentiment was strengthened by experience, they broke out of the bonds that held them, and they finally had the nerve to say what they had thought for a long time. This came from new poets who encouraged the public to say that Quinault was an excellent writer of lyric poetry. La Fontaine and some bright minds have done even more to convince the public that some of Quinault's operas were as excellent as they could be. They have written some that are a lot worse than Quinault. Sixty years ago, no one would dare to say that Quinault was an excellent writer in his genre. Today no one would say otherwise. Of the numberless operas written since his time, only *Thetis and Peleus*, *Iphigenia*, *The Venetian Festivals*, and *L'Europe galante*,[1] can rival the good operas of this lovely poet.

1 *Thétis et Pelée* (1689), opera by Pascal Collasse (1649–1709), French composer; *Iphigénie en*

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_083

If we examine the history of poets who bring honour to the French Parnassus, we will only find ones who owe the success of their works to the public. People of the profession have long since been against them. The public admired *El Cid* for a long time before the poets would agree that the piece is full of admirable things. How many bad critiques, and even worse comedies, did the rivals of Molière write against him? Racine's tragedies never saw the light of day without the publication of a critique that ranked it with mediocre works and concluded by placing the author in the class of Boyer and Pradon.[2] But Racine's fate has been the same as Quinault's. Boileau's prediction about Racine's tragedies has been fully realized. Impartial posterity has ruled in their favour. It is the same with painters. None of them would, after their deaths, attain their due distinction, if his fate was always in the hands of other painters. Fortunately, his rivals only control his fate for a while. Little by little, the public takes the process in its hands, examines painters for themselves, and renders to each the justice that he is due.

But, someone will say, if an enemy cabal hoots down my comedy, how is the public, which no longer hears of this piece, able to render it justice? In the first place, I do not believe that the cabal can make a good piece fail, hoot though they may. *The Grumbler*[3] was hooted, but it did not fail. In the second place, this work was published and stayed in the public eye. An intelligent person, of a profession too serious to be prejudiced against a piece's value, having heard nothing about it, reads it without prejudice and finds it to be good. He speaks to people who have confidence in him. They read the play and feel the truth. They tell other people about their discovery and the piece that was supposed to be drowned, *returns to the surface*. This is the end. This is a way, of a hundred, by which a good piece, to which the public had done an injustice when it was new, can be re-established at the rank it is owed. But, as I have already said, though that seldom happens, I do not think that anyone can name a single French work that, rejected by the public when it was new, the public subsequently found good when the circumstances that had led to its failure had been

---

Tauride (1704), opera by André Campra (1660–1744) and Henri Desmarets (1661–1741), French composers; *Les fêtes vénitiennes* (1710), opera by Campra; *L'Europe galante* (1696), opera-ballet by Campra.

2 Claude Boyer (1618–1698), French clergyman, poet and playwright and member of the Academie française. Jacques Pradon (1644–1698), French playwright. In the view of many critics, Pradon's plays are unimaginative, prudish, formulaic, and historically uniformed.

3 *Le Grondeur* (1691), by Jean de Palaprat (1650–1721), French lawyer and playwright. At its first appearance, this work was criticized by noble theatregoers but very popular with the groundlings and was soon established in the repertoire. See, Frederick Hawkins, *Annals of the French Stage from its Origin to the Death of Racine*, vol. 2 (London: 1884), 214.

removed. On the contrary, I can cite several initially unsuccessful comedies and operas that suffered the same misfortune when they were revived after twenty years. The cabals to which the author and his friends attributed the work's first failure had dissolved by the time the work was produced again. But the public does not change its sentiment because it always takes the right side. A piece always appears mediocre to them, after it is revived, if they had judged it so on its first production. One might ask how long the public needs to understand a work and pass judgement on the ability of the artist. I would respond, that this length of time is uncertain and depends on two things. It depends on the nature of the work and on the capacity of the public to which it is presented. A play, for example, will be appraised at its right value sooner than an epic poem. The public gathers to judge plays and audience members soon communicate their opinions to each other. A painter whose works are in the cupolas and vaults of a church, or who paint large pictures destined for places where people habitually congregate, is more quickly known than the painter who works on easel pictures destined to be kept in private residences.

CHAPTER 29

That There Are Countries Where the Value of Works Is More Quickly Appreciated Than in Others.

In the second place, since across countries the public is not equally enlightened, there are places where people of the profession mislead the public for longer than is possible in other countries. For example, paintings displayed in Rome are appreciated for their proper worth more quickly than if they were displayed in London or Paris. Nearly every Roman is born with great sensibility for painting, and there are more occasions for their natural taste to be nourished and perfected by excellent works of art found in their Churches, their Palaces, and in almost every home that one can enter. Customs and habits in this country allow a lot of free time during the day, even for those artists condemned like the Danaids[1] to unrelenting work. This inactivity, the continuous opportunity to see beautiful paintings, and perhaps also a greater sensibility of their sense organs than those in colder and more humid countries have, provide such a widespread taste for painting in Rome that it is not unusual to see prize paintings hanging in barbershops. In order to entertain them, which even in the days of Horace seemed to be a professional requirement, barbers enthusiastically talk about their beautiful works of art with their customers. In an industrious nation capable of all sorts of effort to make a living, but without being burdened by a regular job, a whole group of people seeks to make a profit by means of dealing in paintings.

The Roman public is composed almost exclusively of connoisseurs of painting. They are, if you will, mostly mediocre connoisseurs, but at least they have a comparative taste that prevents people of the profession from easily imposing on them, as others are imposed on elsewhere. If the Roman public cannot systematically refute their false reasoning, they know enough, at least, to sense the error; experience lets them know what they need to say to refute it. On the other hand, people of the profession become more circumspect when they sense that they are doing business with more enlightened men. It is never among the theologians that innovators try to make sincere proselytes.

1 From Greek mythology, the daughters of Danaus were known as the 'Danaids.' Akin to the myth of Sisyphus, condemned to push a rock up a hill every day only to have it roll back down, these fifty young women were supposed to marry their fifty cousins. Except for one, every one

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_084

The painter who works in Rome quickly attains the reputation he deserves, especially if he is Italian. Nearly as enamoured by the glory of their nation as were the Greeks before, Italians are very jealous of the reputation they acquired for their science and arts. With regard to sciences, all Italians agree with what Ottieri wrote in the history of the war incited by the succession of the Spanish King Charles II [Published at Rome in 1728].[2] After having said that Italians should no longer call inhabitants of the provinces located in the north outside of Italy 'barbarians,' but rather '*Ultramontanas*,'[3] on account of the civility they have acquired, Ottieri added, "*E i nostri Italiani benche forniti di senmo e capacità non inferiore all' altre Nationi, sono rimasi per questa et per altre cagioni auviliti, e presso che abietti nel preggio dell' eccellente litteratura*" [Page 256].[4] But the Italians do not think similarly of their fine arts. When it comes to the works of a foreign painter, every Italian considers himself a painter. He even complains about, so to speak, ideas that are a credit to their inventor that are born in brains other than those of his compatriots. One of my friends was an eyewitness to this story that I will now tell.

Everyone is familiar with the misfortunes of Belisarius,[5] reduced to begging in the street after having commanded Emperor Justinian's army with resounding success. Van Dyck made a great easel painting in which the unfortunate general is represented in the posture of a beggar holding out his hand to passers-by.[6] All of the people looking at him appear moved by a compassion that indicates the character of his age and condition. But above all else the soldier draws our attention, his face and demeanour revealing a man plunged into the darkest

---

of these young women killed their husbands-to-be, and were as a result condemned to carry water in a sieve every day.

2 Francesco Maria Ottieri (1665–1742), *Istoria delle guerre avvenute in Europa e particolarmente in Italia per la successione alla Monarchia delle Spagne, dall' anno 1696 all' anno 1725* [History of the War that took place in Europe and particularly in Italy to the succession of the Monarchy from Spain, from the year 1696 to the year 1725] (Rome: 1728).

3 This is the Latin name for people who lived beyond, or on the other side of, the Alps.

4 Ottieri, *History of the War*, 28: "Though endowed with as much sense and capacity as other nations, Italians have for this and other reasons fallen off with respect to excellent literature."

5 Flavius Belisarius (ca. AD 505–565) was a general of the Byzantine Empire under the rule of Justinian. He waged military campaigns against a wide range of enemies, including the Vandals and Ostrogoths. His life did not go well after his final battle to protect territory on the Danube, and he was faced with corruption charges on spurious grounds. Later he was supported by his wife, whose reputation for excessive drinking and having an affair with their adopted son was widely known and ridiculed.

6 A Van Dyck painting, depicted a blind Belisarius begging on the left side of the canvas, his shield and baton on the ground, three women putting coins in his hand while he is watched by a Roman soldier and a dog.

depression at the sight of this warrior fallen from the most admirable military rank to the lowest level of misery. It is as if the soldier is speaking, and we understand him to say, "This could be my fate after forty campaigns!" A British lord happened to be in Rome where he had brought this painting for Carlo Maratta to see. "What a pity," said the painter, with one of those little outbursts which in a flash revealed his true heart, "that an Ultramontana got there before us with this creation!" I have also heard from credible sources that some Roman commoners were such enemies of the reputation of our French painters that they ripped up prints engraved[7] from Le Sueur, Le Brun, Mignard,[8] Coypel, and several other painters of our country, which the Roman Carthusians[9] had put alongside prints engraved from Italian artists in the gallery over the cloisters of the monastery. Frequent comparisons made between French and Italian masters aroused the jealousy of our Romans as much as comparisons drawn eighty years ago between the paintings made by Le Sueur in the little cloister of the Roman Carthusians and those by Le Brun among students in Paris. Just as the Parisian Carthusians had to hide Le Sueur's artworks to prevent them from being insulted by Le Brun's students, the Roman Carthusians were forced to prevent people from entering the gallery where prints of the French painters were on display.

If it has nothing to do with cooking or clean air, the French are rather well-disposed to foreigners, whereas the Italians are completely prejudiced against Ultramontaignes. The Frenchman first considers a foreign artist more skilled than his fellow citizens, and he does not correct his error, when he is mistaken, until he has made numerous comparisons. Not easily does he esteem an artist born in his own country over an artist born five hundred leagues from France. On the contrary, an Italian is biased against every foreigner who practices the liberal arts. If an Italian gives props to a foreigner, he does so at the latest possible date. This is how the Italians who, after having long neglected Poussin, finally came to recognize him as one of the greatest masters ever to have picked up a paintbrush. They also did justice to Le Brun's genius. After having made him Prince of the Academy of Saint Luke,[10] they speak highly of his merit,

7 A common style of reproducing paintings was to create print copies of them either from woodcuts or engravings. This style of reproduction became very popular in Western Europe during the Renaissance.

8 Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), French painter. An enemy of Charles le Brun, Mignard refused to acknowledge the authority of the French Academy of Painting.

9 The Carthusians are a Roman Catholic monastic founded by Bruno of Cologne. Their first monastery was near Grenoble.

10 The *Accademia di San Luca* was an artists' association in Rome. See p. 448.

although they stress a little too much the weakness of his colouring despite the fact that he was better than the great masters of the Roman School. In general, Italians take great pride in their discretion, and the French in their hospitality. In the chapter in his book on Newton's philosophy, which he dedicated to Fontenelle, Algarotti said, "Without the translation of certain French books, we would have nothing new in Italy, save for a few lines of verse and some songs with which we are inundated" [Algaroti, *Epître sur le Newtonianisme, datée du 24 Janvier 1736*].[11]

In Paris the public does not know painting as it does in Rome. The French generally lack the lively inner sentiment of the Italians. The difference between them is already noticeable between people who live at the foot of the Alps on the side of the Gauls and that of the Italians; but it is even more noticeable between Parisian and Roman locals. It is more necessary for us that we cultivate a sensibility for painting as much as they do, common to all people. Generally speaking, we do not acquire the taste for comparison here as well as they do in Rome. We develop taste without ever thinking about it. When we see paintings when we are young, the idea and images of a dozen excellent paintings engrave and imprint themselves deeply on our developing brains. These paintings, whose ranking is certain and whose value is fixed, stay with us, if I can put it this way, and serve as pieces for comparison. They provide the means soundly to judge whether a new work of art approaches the perfection attained by other painters, and in what class it ought to be placed. The idea presented to our minds by those twelve pictures provides part of the effect that those same pictures would have produced, had they been set alongside the ones whose merit we are trying to discern and rank. Differences in merit between two paintings displayed side-by-side strike anyone who is not stupid.

In order to acquire the comparative taste that can judge present paintings relative to ones that absent, one must be nourished at the breast of painting. There must be ample opportunity, mainly when we are young, to view numerous excellent paintings from the perspective of a calm mind. An untroubled mind is no less necessary for taking in the beauty of a work than for composing it. To be a good spectator, one needs to have this tranquility of soul, borne not from boredom, but from a calm imagination.

11 Du Bos refers to the contents of a letter from Francesco Algarotti (1712–1764), polymath, philosopher and art critic. He travelled in the circles of great intellectuals, and was a fellow of the British Royal Society, an indication of his Anglophilia. He was best known for his *Le Newtonianism pour les dames* [Newtonianism for women], (Paris: 1739).

Phaedri libellos legere si desideras,
Vaces oportet, Eutyche, a negotiis
Ut liber animus sentiat vim carminis.
[*Phaedr*. Bk. 3. Prolog.][12]

But, in France, we live in an unrelenting series of pleasures and tumultuous pursuits that crowd the day, leaving us permanently tired and depleted. We can describe ourselves as Pliny described Romans of his day, who were a little busier than Romans today, when he complained of the scant notice paid to the magnificent statues adorning the many doorways. [*Magis*] *negotiorum officiorumque acervi abducunt omnes a contemplatione talium, quoniam otiosorum et in magno loci silentio apta admiratio talis est* [*Hist*. bk. 36, ch. 5].[13] Our life is a perpetual burden, either when making enough money to satisfy our limitless needs, or keeping it in a country where it is just as hard to preserve goods as it is to acquire them. Pleasures more vivid and frequent here than elsewhere lay claim on the little time we have left over after a long day at work, or that restlessness makes us seek out. Countless courtiers have lived at Versailles for thirty years, regularly passing through the great hall five or six times a day, who would have us believe that *The Pilgrims of Emmaüs* was by Le Brun, and the *Queens of Persia at the feet of Alexander* by Paul Veronese.[14] The French will easily believe me.

This is why Le Sueur deserved his reputation long before he enjoyed it. Poussin, whom we praise so highly today, was badly received by the public until those glorious days when he travelled in France.[15] Disinterested people, whose

12 Aesop, *Phaedrus* 3, Prologue: "If you want to read the little books of Phaedrus, Eutychus, you must take leave of business, so your mind may be free to feel the power of my verse."

13 Pliny, *Natural History* 36.27: "At Rome, indeed, the great number of works of art and again their consequent effacement from our memory, and, even more, the multitude of official functions and business activities must, after all, deter anyone from serious study, since the appreciation involved needs leisure and deep silence in our surroundings." Du Bos has given a truncated version of this quotation, given in English in full.

14 *Les Pèllerins d'Emmaüs* is an early painting by Paul Veronese, composed in 1559. It depicts the biblical story of a dinner at the home of a pilgrim in the village of Emmaüs (Luke 24:13–35) after Jesus had risen from the dead. *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre*, also called *The Tent of Darius*, is a painting by Charles Le Brun, composed in 1660. The painting depicts Darius' mother prostrating herself at the feet of Alexander, the Macedonian king, after he vanquished her son at the battle of Issus. She is begging for clemency for her family, now imprisoned. In Book 1, Chapter Thirty-one, Du Bos explains that these two paintings hang side by side in the "great apartment of the King of Versailles."

15 Du Bos may be referring to the fact that Eustache Le Sueur's paintings acquired greater recognition when they were represented as tapestries. Apparently, his designs converted

opinion conforms to truth, recognize each other and place their confidence in an opinion that they see to be the opinion of the majority. They oppose those who would rank together two very unequal craftsmen. Each year one artist climbs one step higher, the other a step lower, and in the end these artists are found to be so far away from one another that the disabused public is shocked to have put them alongside one another. Can you believe today that, at one time, they placed Mignard alongside Le Brun? Perhaps in twenty years we will be just as surprised when we reflect on comparisons that are made today.

The same thing happened at the School of Antwerp, where the public is scarcely more learned about painting than in Paris. Before Van Dyck travelled to England, other painters set him among peers that the muddled public thought were his equals. Today the distance between them seems infinite, because each day error has lost a supporter and truth has gained one. When Rubens' School was at the height of its powers, the Dominicans of Antwerp wanted to have fifteen great devotional paintings to decorate the nave of their church.[16] Happy with the price they proposed, Van Dyck volunteered to paint them all. But other painters suggested to the good fathers that they divide up the work and employ twelve of Rubens' students, who seemed to be very nearly the same caliber. They told the clergy that the diversity of hands would make the series of paintings more appealing, and that emulation required each painter to surpass himself in work destined to be forever compared with the paintings of their contemporaries. Of the fifteen paintings, Van Dyck did only two, *The Mocking of the Christ*[17] and the *Carrying of the Cross*.[18] Today, the public scorns the rivals that were set against Van Dyck.

Since we have seen in France more excellent poets than great painters, there has been more occasion to cultivate a natural taste for poetry than for painting. Although beautiful paintings in Paris are practically closed off in places where the public does not have free access, we have theatres open to the whole world where one can say, without fear of reprisal for having been blinded by national prejudice, which is nearly as dangerous as party loyalty, that they represent the

---

very well into that medium. Nicolas Poussin was born in France but moved to Rome when he was thirty. Under pressure from King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu, he was compelled to return to Paris to serve as the First Painter to the King from 1640–1642. Upon his return to Rome in 1642, Poussin enjoyed the most productive period of his artistic career.

16 These paintings were located in St. Paul's Church in Antwerp. Rubens' painting *The Vision of St. Dominic* adorned the main altar. In 1670, a new painting was commissioned by the Dominicans from Theodoor Boeyermans (1620–1678), baroque history painter. Both paintings were stolen in 1794 and sent to Paris.

17 *The Mocking of the Christ* by Van Dyke (1628–1630).

18 *Christ Carrying the Cross* by Van Dyke (1625).

best theatrical pieces made since the renewal of letters. Foreigners never adopt the comedies and tragedies of other nations with the same excitement, nor the same respect for their authors, as they adopt our own. Foreigners translate our tragedies, but they remain content to imitate those from other nations. Most young people frequent theatres in France and, without thinking of it, countless comparison pieces and touchstones swirl around in their heads. Women attend our entertainment venues as freely as men, and they speak openly of poetry, and mainly dramatic poetry. The public knows enough to give justice to terrible pieces right away, and to protect good ones from the hordes.

The verdict on printed works can be given after a few months; but works which appear in the theatre soon realise their destiny. Human understanding could know nothing with certainty if four hundred people, who exchanged ideas about their sentiment, could believe that they were moved when they were not, or if they could be touched without having been presented with a truly engaging object. The public truly does not know immediately how to differentiate between the good and the exquisite. At first, the public will give no praise to a piece like *Phaedra*, as much as it deserves it. Until they have seen it a few times, the public does not know how to appraise the work. Until after having compared the pleasure it gives with the satisfaction they enjoy from excellent works, with a long and established reputation, they do not give it the pre-eminence it deserves.

CHAPTER 30

Objection Based On Good Works That the Public Appeared to Disapprove, as well as Bad Ones That They Praise; And the Response to This Objection.

Someone will object that sometimes a bad farce or a lousy comedy has amused the public for a long time, still drawing an audience to the twentieth performance. But the public that goes to see these farces when they are new will tell you themselves that they are not under any illusions. They know these music hall comedies are worthless. At the same time, they will tell you that they recognize the huge difference between these pieces and *The Misanthrope* and that they only go to see an actor who shines in a bizarre role, or a scene that has to do with a recent incident, of which everyone is talking. Thus, after the novelty wears off, and the circumstances that gave the piece interest have passed, the public completely forgets these farces, and the actors who played them forget them completely. This proves that,

> … *Olim quom stetit nova,*
> *Actoris opera magis stetisse quam sua.*
> [Prolog. *Phorm.* Ter.][1]

But, someone will add, the success of *The Misanthrope* was uncertain for a while. Pradon's *Phaedra*, despised and, to go further, completely forgotten today, enjoyed at first a success equal to that of Racine's *Phaedra*.[2] For a while, Pradon drew as many spectators to the Hôtel de Guénegaud as Racine had at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In short, the two tragedies, which appeared in the same month, wrestled for several days before the excellent one crushed the bad.

1 Terence, *Phormio*, Prologue 10–11: "When one of his own new plays once succeeded, its success was more due to the producer than to himself."

2 *Phèdre et Hippolyte* (1677). Racine's *Phèdre* (1677) was, as Du Bos says, first produced at about the same time. Racine is reported to have said, "*La seule différence entre Pradon et moi est que moi je sais écrire.*" ("The only difference between Pradon and me is that I know how to write.") See, Saint-Marc Girardin and Philarète Chasles, *La Harpe: Cours de littérature ancienne et modern*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1857), 568.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_085

Though *The Misanthrope* is, perhaps, the best comedy that we have today, nevertheless when we reflect on the circumstances under which Molière performed it, it is not surprising that the public hesitated for a few days before acknowledging its excellence. The majority did not decide in favour of the play until after eight or ten performances. At that time, no one really knew the genre of noble comedy. This employs an ensemble of *vraisemblable*, but varied, characters in a manner that results in amusing incidents, without the characters being thought to be comic. Until then, so to speak, no one had entertained the public with unmasked faces. The public was accustomed for a long time to crude or gigantic comedies, which presented low or heroic adventures and put on stage off-colour and ribald jokes. Thus, the public was surprised to see a muse who, without putting grinning masks on the actors, did not fail to make excellent comic characters. At the same time, Molière's rivals swore, on the basis of their knowledge of the theatre, that the new genre of comedy was worthless. The public hesitated for a few days. They did not know whether they had been mistaken in thinking that *Jodelet, Master and Servant*, and *Don Japhet of Armenia*,[3] were in good taste or whether it was wrong to think that *The Misanthrope* was in good taste. But, after a certain number of performances, everyone grasped that treating comedy as moral philosophy was the best. Everyone came in a short time to admire it and left the jealous poets, always as unreliable about the works of their contemporaries as women are about the beauty of their rivals, to argue against *The Misanthrope*.

People with exquisite taste, who have a better perspective than others, predicted from the beginning the side that the public would soon take. The Duke of Montausier[4] praised *The Misanthrope* after its first performance. Racine was vexed by the danger that seemed to threaten Molière's reputation. Boileau, after having seen the third performance, assured Racine that this comedy would be a brilliant success. The public completely vindicated the judgement of the author of *The Art of Poetry*. For a long time, the French have regarded *The Misanthrope* as the glory of their comic stage. It is the French piece that our neighbours have adopted with the greatest fondness.

As for Pradon's *Phaedra*, it was supported by a cabal consisting of many people, equally noteworthy for their intelligence and their social position. They

3 *Jodelet Maître et Valet* (1645) is an example of crude comedy. *Dom Japhet d'Arménie* (1653) is also by Scarron and is an example of a gigantic comedy with heroic adventures.

4 Charles de Sainte-Maure, duc de Montausier (1610–1690), French soldier and nobleman. He is reputed to be the inspiration for Alceste, the title character in *The Misanthrope*. See, "Montausier, Charles de Sainte-Maure," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8, 11th ed. (New York: 1910–1911), 761.

conspired to elevate Pradon's *Phaedra* and humiliate Racine's. The conspiracy of the Marquis de Bedmar[5] against the Republic of Venice was not conducted with greater cleverness or pursued with greater vigour. However, what came of this conspiracy? It made a few more people go to Pradon's tragedy than otherwise would have gone, but their only motive was to see how Racine's contemporary had treated the same subject as this ingenious poet had. But this famous conspiracy could not prevent the public from admiring Racine's *Phaedra* after the fourth performance. The success of these two tragedies seems equal, when we count the number of people who bought tickets for the Hôtel de Guénegaud and the Hôtel de Bourgogne. However, the difference was apparent from the comments of those who left these two theatres, in which different companies performed French comedy. At the end of the month, any shade of equality had disappeared, and the Hôtel de Guénegaud, where Pradon's piece was performed, became deserted. Everyone knows Boileau's lines on the success of Corneille's *El Cid*:

> *En vain contre* Le Cid *un Ministre se ligue,*
> *Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue*.[6]

I have already mentioned Quinault's operas. I have, I think, said enough to convince, at least in their hearts, our dramatic poets whose works have not succeeded, that the public only proscribes bad works. If we can apply the words of Juvenal to them: do not envy a poet who lives by the theatre:

> *Haud tamen invideas vati quem pulpita pascunt*.[7]

This is for other reasons, that I do not address here.

One could still object that in their theatres the Greeks and Romans often passed unjust sentences, and that they subsequently retracted them. According to Martial, the Athenians often denied the comedy prize to Menander.[8]

> *Rara coronato plausere Theatra Menadro*.[9]

---

5 Alfonso de la Cueva-Benavides y Mendoza-Carrillo, marqués de Bedmar (1574–1655), Spanish diplomat and cardinal.

6 Boileau, *Satire* 9. Ximene (Chimène) is the beloved of Rodrigo (Rodrigue) (El Cid).
In vain against *El Cid* a minister plots,
All of Paris has for Ximene the eyes of Rodrigo.

7 Juvenal, *Satires*, 7.93: "But don't go envying bards fed by the stage."

8 Menander (ca. 342–290 BC), leading representative of the Athenian New Comedy School.

9 Martial, *Epigrams* 5.10.9: "seldom did the theaters applaud a crowned Menander."

Some authors cited by Aulus Gellius [Aulugel. Bk. 17, ch. 4][10] have written that of the hundred comedies by Menander, only eight were fortunate enough to win the prize that the ancients gave to the poet who had the best piece among those produced on the occasion of certain solemnities. We also learn from Aulus Gellius that Euripides only saw five of his seventy-five tragedies crowned. The public rose against Terence's *Hecyra*[11] the first time it was performed and did not permit the actors to finish.

I respond: Aulus Gellius and Martial do not say that the tragedies of Euripides or the comedies of Menander were judged bad. Other pieces were simply judged better. If we had the victorious pieces, perhaps we would grasp how they could dazzle the audience. Perhaps we would even find that the audience had judged correctly. The great Corneille was, generally speaking, much superior to Rotrou.[12] Nevertheless, there are several tragedies by Corneille, I dare not say how many, which would lose the prize to Rotrou's *Wenceslaus* in the judgement of a fair audience. Similarly, though Menander wrote some comedies that made him superior to Philemon,[13] a poet whose pieces often won the prize over those of Menander, Philemon could have written several that deserved the prize more than certain comedies of Menander. Quintilian reports that the Athenians made only one mistake about Philemon: they preferred him too often to Menander. They would have been justified if they had been content to give him second place. In the judgement of everyone, he deserved to be placed immediately after Menander. *Philemon, qui ut pravis sui temporis iudiciis Menandro saepe praelatus est, ita consensu tamen omnium meruit credi secundus* [Quint. *Inst*. bk. 10].[14] Apuleius speaks of Philemon, in *Florida* 2, as a very talented poet. The moral excellence of his comedies made him particularly recommendable.[15] Apuleius praised him for his many good maxims, for having included few seductions in his plays, and for treating love as a distraction. *Sententiae vitae congruentes*. […] *Rarae apud ilbum corruptelae, et uti errores*

10 Aulus Gellius (AD 125–180), Roman writer educated at Athens. He is known today for his only surviving work, *Attic Nights*. This is a commonplace book in which he collected anything interesting or unusual that he came across.

11 The first two performances of *Hecyra* [The Mother-in-Law] in 160 and 165 BC were disrupted, the first by a rumour about a performance by boxers and a tightrope walker, the second by some gladiatorial fans.

12 Rotrou's *Venceslas* (1647) (to give it its French title) is considered one of the best of his thirty-five or more plays.

13 Philemon (ca. 362–262 BC), Athenian poet and playwright of the New Comedy School.

14 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.72: "Philemon, who was often preferred to Menander by the depraved taste of his age, and has none the less deserved to be universally regarded as second best."

15 Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis (124–170), prose writer and philosopher.

concessi amores.[16] Were the Athenians not right to pay attention to the morals of their comic poets when distributing the prize?

As for Euripides, the best dramatic poets of Greece were his contemporaries and their pieces probably won the prize over his. So it would be a mistake to put Euripides and Menander at the top of the list of poets disdained by spectators, in order to console our dramatists with a fate similar to theirs, namely, the public's sometimes high-handed and unpleasant treatment of their works.

I have another reason to present against the objection I am addressing. The theatre of those times was no tribunal like ours. Since the theatres of the ancients were enormous, and entrance was free, the audience would degenerate into a veritable mob, full of inattentive people, always ready to distract those who were capable of paying attention. Horace says that the winds unleashed in the forests of Mount St. Angel, and the roar of the agitated ocean were not noisier than these tumultuous assemblies. What actors, he asked, have voices loud enough to make themselves heard?

> *... Nam quae pervincere voces*
> *Evaluere sonum, referunt quem nostra theatra?*
> *Garganum mugire putes nemus aut mare Tuscum;*
> *Tanto cum strepitu ludi spectantur ...*
> [Horace. *Epist*. Bk. 2.1][17]

The lowest class of citizen was bored because they were not paying attention to the play, and would sometimes loudly demand, from the third act on, entertainment more suited to them. They even insulted those who wanted to make the actors continue. Descriptions of the tumult can be seen in the continuation of the passage from Horace just cited, and in the Prologue to *Hecyre*, performances of which were twice interrupted by impetuous incursions. Many magistrates were appointed to prevent the disorder, but as often happens with important things, they usually did not do their duty. In Rome, during the reign of Tiberius who, of all princes knew how to make himself obeyed, several ranking officers of the Emperor's Guard were killed or wounded in the theatre, while trying to prevent disorder. The Senate gave the praetors permission to exile the authors of similar disturbances; this was the only punishment. The emperors

16 Apuleius, *Florida* 3.16: "Sentiments applicable to life ... The rapes in his works are few, the mistakes slight, the love affairs respectable." (Du Bos says that the passage is in Book 2.)

17 Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.200–203: "For what voices have ever prevailed to drown the din with which our theatres resound? One might think it was the roaring of the Garganian forest or of the Tuscan Sea: amid such clamour is the entertainment viewed."

who wanted to make themselves popular even removed the soldiers that sometimes guarded the theatres. Our theatres are not subject to similar storms. Calm and order reign with a tranquility that it would seem impossible to establish in social gatherings of a nation as lively as ours and in which part of the citizens, gathered to be entertained, come armed, and the rest unarmed. They listen peacefully to bad pieces and sometimes even to actors who are not any better.

Today the public does not gather to judge non-dramatic poems, as they did in ancient times. Thus, people of the profession can favour some poems and they can belittle all those poems that are only produced to move our sentiments. They can highlight beautiful passages and excuse bad ones. They can deprecate the value of the most beautiful passages, either by saying that they are stolen or comparing them with the verses of another poet who has treated the same subject. Thus, the public, having been led into error about the general assessment of these poems, can no longer be disabused in a day. It takes time for disinterested people to recognize each other, and to mutually strengthen each other's sentiments; there is strength in numbers. The best proof that we can have of the excellence of a poem, on its first publication, is that it is read. Moreover, all those who have read it speak of it with affection, even though they criticize its flaws.

In my view, these days it takes about two years after the publication of a new poem, if it is a good work, to determine its general value. When a poem is bad, the public does not take so long to condemn it, despite the efforts of most people of the profession to prop up its reputation. When Chapelain's *Maid of Orleans*[18] appeared, it had the support of men of letters, foreign and French. The blessings of the powerful had already crowned it, and everyone, alerted by this praise, awaited it with burning incense. However, the public, as soon as it had read *The Maid of Orleans*, threw off their prejudices. The public had contempt for it before reason had taught any critic that it was contemptible. Everyone soon learned that other people yawned while reading it, and *The Maid of Orleans* became an old woman in the cradle.

18 Jean Chapelain (1595–1674), French poet, a founder of the Académie française and author of *La Pucelle, ou la France délivrée, poème héroïque* (1656) [The Maid, or France Rescued], which tells of the defeat of England by the French led by Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans. "*La Pucelle*" means "*The Maid*," which is a reference to Joan of Arc (ca. 1412–1431), whose nickname was "The Maid of Orléans." Despite Chapelain's public and respected role as one of the founding members of the Académie française, this poem was subject to intense criticism, most notably by Boileau.

CHAPTER 31

That Public Judgement Is Never Retracted, and That It Always Perfects Itself.

Public judgement is always perfecting itself. Day by day *The Maid of Orleans* becomes more despised, and each day the reputation of *Polyeucte*,[1] *Phaedra*, *The Misanthrope*,[2] and the *Art of Poetry*[3] increases. During his lifetime, a poet's reputation cannot reach the height it deserves. When he produces good works, a thirty-year old author will not live long enough for the public to judge not only that his works are excellent, but that they are of the same calibre as the works of the Greeks and Romans, who have been continuously praised by those who have heard them. Until the public has placed a modern author's works at such a rank, his reputation can always increase. Two or three years may be enough time for the public to know if a new poem is any good, or merely mediocre; but it requires perhaps a century to know its full merit, supposing that it might be a first rank work of its kind. This is why the Romans, who had the *Elegies* of Tibullus and Propertius in their hands, took some time before likening them to the *Elegies* of Ovid. This is why the Romans did not stop reading Ennius the moment Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Bucolics* appeared. This is the literal meaning of the following epigram by Martial, which unsuccessful poets happily cite. Martial says nothing other than this in this line:

> *Ennius est lectus, salvo tibi, Roma, Marone.*
> [Mart. x. *Epigr*. Bk. 5][4]

It would be ridiculous to pretend that Martial dreamed of saying that the Romans had put Ennius's poems at the same level as the *Aeneid* for any period of time, since this epigram has to do specifically with what happened in Rome

1 *Polyeucte Martyr* is a drama by Pierre Corneille. The plot is based on the life of the Roman Saint Polyeuctus (d. 259).

2 *The Misanthrope* is the best-known work by Molière.

3 By Boileau, (1674) a didactic poem written in 1100 lines of Alexandrine verse.

4 Martial, *Epigrams* 5.10.6: "You read Ennius, Rome, while Maro lived." Quintus Ennius (ca. 239–ca. 169 BC) is generally considered to be the first Roman poet, which may account for part of Martial's point, since he was well-known and long-established. "Maro" refers to Virgil.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_086

when Virgil was still alive. Everyone knows, of course, that the *Aeneid* is one of those works which is called a 'posthumous work,' because it was published after the author's death.

In a poem, I distinguish, if I may be pardoned the expression, two kinds of merit: real and comparative merit. Real merit consists in being pleasing and moving. Comparative merit consists in moving as much as or more than other authors of the same known rank. It consists in pleasing and engaging as much as the Greeks and Romans did, who are commonly thought to have attained the highest levels the human spirit can reach, because we have yet to see anything better than what they did.

Contemporaries are very good at judging the real merit of a work, but there are subjects that trip them up, either when they judge its comparative merit or when they want to ascertain the status it is due. Two subjects in particular lead people to fall into one of two errors when they try to make this judgement.

The first error is to consider the work equal to ancient works. The second error is to suppose that there is a greater disparity between it and the perfection of ancient works than there really is. Regarding the first, I claim that the public sometimes makes mistakes when excessively enamoured with new productions that move and please them; they unfairly usurp the rights of history by deciding that these new productions are at the same level as the Greeks and Romans, which are commonly called 'sacred works,' and that their contemporaries will always be the leading poets of their language. This is how the contemporaries of Ronsard and the French Pleiade were mistaken when they said that French poets could never be better than these new Promethians [Ronsard, Belleau, Joachim du Bellai, Jodelle, Pontus de Thiart, Dorat, Baïf],[5] whom, to speak poetically, had no divine fire in their nature other than what they could steal from the writings of the ancients.[6]

Ronsard, the Pleiade's most brilliant star, had lots of education but little genius. In his poetry, one finds no sublime ideas, felicitous turns of phrases, or noble figures of speech that cannot be found in Greek and Latin authors. He

5 Du Bos lists Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), Remy Belleau (1528–1577), Joachim du Bellay (ca. 1522–1560), Étienne Jodelle (1532–1573), Pontus de Tyard/Thiard (ca. 1521–1605), Jean Daurat (1508–1588), and Jean Antoine de Baïf (1532–1589). These 16th century Renaissance poets and critics were all members of the Pléiade, naming themselves after the 3rd century AD ancient Alexandrian Pleiad, which in turn named itself after the Pléiades constellation of seven stars. The impact of this group on French literature was significant: they urged that the French vernacular be modelled on Greek and Latin grammatical form and advocated for the introduction of neologisms.

6 Du Bos is alluding to the fact that the members of the Pléiade sometimes took themselves to be possessed with divine inspiration, as if overtaken by the Muses themselves.

was an unenthusiastic appreciator of the ancients, but reading them warmed him and served him as a tripod. Since he brazenly inserted their strengths into his work, and did so with verve, using their collective beauties without allowing himself to be hemmed by our syntactic rules, they seemed to be products of his own invention. The liberties he took with expression appeared as natural witticisms, and his poems, composed in the style of Virgil and Homer, had an air of originality. The beauties with which his works were sprinkled were well suited to please readers either unfamiliar with the originals or so fetishistic as to cherish those traits even in the most disfigured versions. True, Ronsard's language was not the French language, but it was thought that it was impossible to write at once poetically and correctly in our language. Besides, poems written in vernacular languages are as necessary to civilized countries as those first commodities that a nascent luxury puts to use. When Ronsard and his contemporary poets, of whom he was the leader, appeared, our ancestors had hardly any poems they could read with pleasure. Interaction with the ancients which renewed letters, and invention of the printing press, in middle of the previous century, put the ancients into the hands of five hundred people, disgusted by the wooly art of our old Romance writers, for everyone who had read them sixty years earlier. Ronsard's poems were regarded as a gift of heaven by his contemporaries. We would not blame them had they been content to say that their poems were immensely pleasing, and that their imagery added unusual characteristics. But it seems they wanted to claim a right to which they were not entitled. It seems they wanted to usurp the rights of history in declaring Ronsard the leading French poet of their day and times to come.

French poets with more genius than Ronsard have appeared since his day, and they also wrote well. We have accordingly stopped reading Ronsard's works; for our reading and our amusement we read the works of these later poets. With good reason we place them above Ronsard; but those who are familiar with them are not surprised that his contemporaries were prone to read Ronsard's works, despite his Gothic taste for imagery. I conclude the subject of Ronsard with one remark. The poet's contemporaries were not wrong in their judgement about these works and other ones already in their possession. When the French poem first came out, they did not seriously rank the *Franciad*[7] above the *Aeneid*. The same reasons prevented them from making that error were the same that would have prevented them from putting the *Franciad* above *Cinna* and *Horace*,[8] had they had those tragedies in their possession.

7 *La Franciade* (1572) is an unfinished twenty book epic poem, which was received by the public as an artistic failure.

8 *Cinna* (1643) and *Horace* (1640) are tragedies by Pierre Corneille.

After what I have said, clearly we should leave it to time and experience to judge the rank our contemporary poets should hold among writers who compose the collection of books made by men of letters of all nations, and which we might call the *Library of Humankind*. Each people has a particular library of good books written in its own language, but there is another common to all nations. We see that a poet's reputation should increase incrementally, from generation to generation throughout an era, in order to decide that he ranks being placed alongside Greek and Roman authors, who we collectively say are sacred, because they are among those defined by Quintilian, *Ingeniorum monumenta quae saeculis probantur* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 3, ch. 9].[9] Until that point one can have a belief, but it is not wise to be assured in this belief.

In the second place, I say that the public sometimes makes another error in judging contemporary authors to be further away from the perfection attained by the ancients than they actually are. When they have so many poems in their hands to read, the public has great difficulty doing justice to the excellent work being produced. For too long a while, they place them at a great remove from the sacred works. But anyone can reflect for himself about all that I can say on this subject.

Let us speak of the signs by which we can promise, though not attribute, to works published in our time, and in the time of our fathers, the destiny of being regarded by posterity as equal to the works of the ancients. It is a favourable omen that the reputation of these works increases from year to year. This happens when an artist lacks a successor, and even more when he has been dead for a long time without being replaced. There is no better proof of his being uncommon among his peers than the futility of his competitors' efforts. Sixty years have passed since the death of Molière without anyone replacing him, giving a brilliance to his reputation that he could not have had one year after his death. The public has not placed in his class a single one of the best comic poets who have worked since his death. This honour was not given to Regnard,[10] Boursault,[11] nor the two authors of *The Growler* [L'Abbé de Bruïeis & Palaprat],[12]

9 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 3.7.18 "monuments of genius approved by later ages."

10 Jean-François Regnard (1655–1709), French dramatist. He wrote plays for the Comèdie Française, and would have had the strongest claim to being Molière's successor. He was highly regarded by critics, including Boileau.

11 Edmé Boursault (1638–1701), French dramatist. Boursault accused Molière of caricaturing him in *Ecole des Femmes*, and as a result he criticized Molière in *Le Portrait du peintre ou la contra-critique de l'Ecole des Femmes* [The portrait of the painter, or the counter-critique of School of Women] (1663). Consequently, Boursault was pilloried by Boileau in his *Satires* 7 and 9.

12 Jean de Palaprat co-authored plays with David-Augustin de Brueys (1641–1723). Their plays

nor any other comic poets, even though their pieces were amusing when well performed. The same is true for our Gascon poets,[13] who will never be serious contenders to challenge Molière. The author of *The Married Philosopher*[14] was not placed above him. Every year that passes without providing a successor to 'the French Terence'[15] adds even more to his reputation. But, someone will ask, are you sure that history will not contradict the praises that have been bestowed on those French poets whom you already consider comparable to Horace and Terence in times to come?

were performed at the Comédie-Française, including the play mentioned here, *Le Grondeur* in 1691.

13 The Gasconne Renaissance in poetry took place between 1550 and 1650, known as the 'Golden Age of Gasconne poetry.' The leading poet of this period was Pey de Garros (ca. 1525–1583), who wrote a translation of the psalms into Gasconne and *Poesias* (1567).

14 *Le Philosophe Marié* [The Married Philosopher] (1727) was a play written by Philippe Néricault Destouches (1680–1754).

15 Throughout his lifetime and long after, Molière was frequently compared to the ancient playwright Terence. Critics such as Boileau and La Fontaine claimed this comparison in part to legitimize Molière as a writer of classic pieces. According to La Fontaine, "*Te souvient-il qu'autrefois/ Nous avons conclu d'une voix/ Qu'il Molière allait ramener en France/ Le bon goût et l'air de Térence?*" [Do you remember that in the past/ That Molière arrived in France/ With the good taste and appearance of Terence?] Jean De La Fontaine, *Oeuvres Diverses* (Paris: 1774), 525. Throughout his career, this comparison was used both to compliment and insult Molière, according to the whimsy of critics. The precise reasons for the comparison, it has recently been argued, are difficult to pin down; see Michael Call, "A Comedic Practicum: Molière and Terence Revisited," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 31.2 (2009), 123–136.

CHAPTER 32

That, Despite the Critics, the Reputation of Poets That We Admire Will Always Grow.

The fate of Ronsard's writings is not something that the works of our French poets need fear. They write in the same style as the good authors of antiquity. They have not imitated them servilely, as did Ronsard and his contemporaries, and as, according to Horace, Lucilius[1] imitated the Greeks.

> *… hosce secutus,*
> *Mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque.*[2]

Servile imitation of poets who have composed in foreign languages is typical of writers who work when their nation begins to leave barbarism behind. But our good French poets have imitated the ancients in the way that Horace and Virgil imitated the Greeks. That is, they followed, as the others had, the genius of the language in which they wrote and they took, as had the Greeks, nature for their primary model. Good writers borrow from others only the manner of copying nature. The style of Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, and our other illustrious compatriots, cannot age enough to make the reading of their works unpleasant. We could never read them without being touched by their beauties. They are natural.

In fact, it seems to me that our language reached perfection seventy years ago.[3] At the time of d'Ablancourt, an author published sixty years earlier appeared to be a Gothic writer. Though it is already eighty years since d'Ablancourt wrote, his style does not seem old-fashioned. In order to write well, it is necessary to follow the rules that this author and his immediate successors followed. The only reasonable changes that happen to a language, once its syntax has been regularized, could only apply to [the meanings of] words. Some of them age, others become fashionable. New words are coined and the spelling

1 Du Bos has 'Servilius' here, but Horace refers to Lucilius and no Roman poet was called Servilius. Gaius Lucilius (ca. 180–ca. 102 BC), early Roman satirist. Only fragments of his works survive.

2 Horace, *Satires* 1.4.6–7. Quotation corrected. "He followed these men with only feet and metre changed."

3 That is, about 1650, approximately 70 years before the first publication of Du Bos's book.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_087

of others are altered in order to soften the pronunciation. Horace cast the horoscope of all languages, when he said of his own that,

> *Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere cadentque*
> *Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,*
> *Quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.*[4]

Use is always the master of words, but it is rarely the master of syntax. Old-fashioned words do not make us leave off reading an author who has constructed his sentences in accordance with rules, or even comes close to regular construction. Do we not still read Amyot[5] with pleasure?

I will say here, in passing, that the style of Latin writers from the 2nd and subsequent centuries appears dramatically inferior to that of Livy and his contemporaries. This is not because they use new words or because they do not construct their sentences according to the rules of their grammar. The authors of the second and subsequent centuries have, generally speaking, used the same words as Livy. They have constructed their sentences according to the same syntactic rules as he did. At least, this is almost true. But, in their time capricious transpositions were fashionable, and the use of words in unsuitable metaphorical senses was authorized. Words were used without regard for their proper meanings, either in crazy epithets, or in flashy turns of phrase that did not present a distinct image. Word games and the abuse of metaphors disfigure, for example, the prose of Sidonius Apollinaris.[6] But the laws enacted by Majorian[7] and other emperors contemporaneous with this bishop, appear to be made at the time of the first Caesars. The authors of these laws, restrained by the dignity of their work, do not depart from a grave and simple style. This is because they have not been exposed to the danger of abusing figures of speech and forced wit. Though the style is corrupt, though it abused language, we always admire the style in which these authors wrote, when it had vigour and purity. We continue to praise their noble simplicity, even when we are incapable of imitating it. For it is the inability to write as well as they did that leads

4 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 70–72. "Many terms that have fallen out of use shall be born again, and those shall fall that are now in repute, if Usage so will it, in whose hands lies the judgement, the right and the rule of speech."

5 Jacques Amyot (1513–1593), French writer, translator, and clergyman.

6 Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius, usually known as Saint Sidonius Apollinaris (ca. 430–489), Gallo-Roman nobleman, historian, poet and bishop. Among his surviving works are nine volumes of letters.

7 Flavius Julius Valerius Majorianus, usually known in English as Majorian (ca. 420–461), emperor of the Western Roman Empire from 457 until his death.

us to undertake to do better. One only substitutes flashiness and point scoring for meaning and forcefulness when it is easier to be clever than to be, at the same time, touching and natural.

Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and Livy have been read with admiration as long as Latin has been a living language. Writers who wrote 500 years after these authors, in a time when Latin style was already corrupted, praise them even more than they had been praised at the time of Augustus. Veneration for the authors of Plato's era has always endured in Greece, despite the decline of its artists. These authors were still admired as great models 2000 years after they wrote, and when they were very little imitated. I appeal to the testimony of the Greeks who explained these works after the Turks took Constantinople.[8] The best authors of the era of Leo X, such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini, are not old-fashioned for contemporary Italians. Italians prefer the style of these authors to the more ornate style of subsequent writers because Italian syntax was systematized by the 16th century.

The style of our good authors of the era of Louis XIV may always remain fashionable, that is, the style in which our poets and orators strive to compose. Or this style may have the fate of the style in use during the reigns of the first two Caesars, which began to decay during the reign of Claudius, during which free spirits were given the liberty to introduce an excess of symbols. They wanted to substitute brilliant expression for the strong good sense and simple elegance that their genius could not attain. In either case, I hold that the illustrious poets of the era of Louis XIV will be, like Virgil and Ariosto, immortal and ageless.

In second place, our neighbours admire the French poets that we already admire. They repeat as freely as us the lines of Boileau and La Fontaine that have become proverbs. They have adopted our great works, translating them into their own language. Despite the jealousy of the great minds, nearly as active from nation to nation, as from individual to individual, they rank some of these translations above works of the same genre written in their own country. Our great poems, like those of Homer and Virgil, have already entered into the common library of nations, of which we have spoken. It is as rare, in foreign countries, to find a study without Molière as one without Terence. As often as they can, Italians, who avoid giving us opportunities for vanity, have done justice to merits of our poets. Perhaps this is because they believe that they are responsible for our conduct. Just as we admire and translate their 16th-century poets, they admire and translate ours from the 17th century. They have put into

8 The Byzantine Empire came to an end when Constantinople, now Istanbul, fell to the Turks in 1453. Many Byzantine scholars fled to Western Europe, taking with them Greek works from antiquity.

Italian the most beautiful pieces by our comic and tragic poets. Castelli,[9] Secretary to the Elector of Brandenburg, has translated the works of Molière into Italian, and this version has been reprinted several times. Some pieces by Molière have not only been literally translated into Italian more than once. They have also been dressed and cross-dressed, so to speak, as Italian comedies. There is an Italian comedy entitled *Don Piloné* that the author, Gigli, has adapted from Molière's *Tartuffe*. [*Il Don Pilone, ovvero l'bacchettone falso*, *Comedia, Tratta nuovamente dal Franzese da Girolamo Gigli, e dedicata All'illustrissima Signora Contessa Flavia Teodoli Bolognetti*. (Luca: Pel Marescandoli: 1715) *Con Licenza de Superiore*.

Preface: Il Soggetto di quest'Opera è tirato dal celebre Tartufo del Molier.][10]

By the way, since Gigli does not mention in the Preface something that I remember having read in some memoire, that *Tartuffe* was originally an Italian comedy and that he had only adapted it to our theatre, I think that this can be doubted. The author of these memories was perhaps just repeating something that he had heard. The Italians laugh and cry at these plays with as much feelings as they do at performances of pieces by their compatriots. Some of their poets have even complained. The Abbé Gravina, in his dissertation on tragedy, printed twenty-five years ago [In 1715],[11] says that his compatriots adopt without discernment French dramas and the faults are blamed on our nation. These faults have been explained in the words of two of France's finest critics. Gravina means Rapin and Dacier.[12] Gravina adopts their judgements of French tragedies with all the more pleasure since he mainly composed his work to show the superiority of ancient tragedy to modern tragedy. But I am going to report Gravina's passage in its entirely. The reader will not already have forgotten that he was a poet and that he wrote several tragedies in the style of the ancients. *Or ecco questa Nazione, dal tempo di Franceso Primo should be upper case fino a' nostri giorni, cultissima; con che serietà di giudizio, per mezzo de' suoi più fini Critici, pronuncia delle proprie opere teatrali; e con che distinzione propone quelle, che da noi ciecamente, e senza discrezione alcuna, son ricevute, e*

9 Niccolò Castelli (1661–?), Italian translator, professor of Italian, and civil servant.

10 Girolamo Gigli (1660–1722), Italian playwright. Du Bos gives in this note the entire contents of the title page of the play (here corrected) and quotes from the first sentence of the Preface (*A chi legge*) by way of proving that the play is an adaptation of Molière's *Tartuffe* (first version 1664; final revised version 1669).

11 Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664–1718), Italian clergyman, jurist, and man of letters. Du Bos refers to *Della tragedia* (1715).

12 Anne Le Fèvre Dacier (ca. 1650–1720), scholar and translator of classical literature, including celebrated translations of Homer.

sparse per tutti i teatri, e tradotte, col fregio de' nuovi pensieri falsi, ed espressioni più romanzesche, e altre più belle pompe, le quali staccano per sempre la mente, e la favella degli uomini dalle regole della Natura e della ragione [Page 125].[13] If, as this author alleges, his compatriots add flashiness and romantic expression to our pieces, the fault is not ours.

Educated young people know Boileau as well as Horace, and they remember as much French poetry as Latin in the Hague, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Poland, Germany, and even England. We must not be suspicious of the approval of the English. However, they praise Racine. They admire Corneille, Boileau, and Molière. They treat them as they do Virgil and Cicero. They have translated them into English. When a play succeeds in France, it is certain to receive this honour. I do not even believe that the English have three translations of Virgil's *Eclogues*. However, they have three translations of Corneille's *Horace* [That of [William] Lower, published in 1656. That of [Charles] Cotton, published in 1671. That of Mrs. [Katherine] Philips, completed by Sir John Denham, and published 1668].[14] Since 1675, the English have made a prose translation of Racine's *Andromache*, which was revised and staged by Crowne.[15] In 1712, Philips[16] staged and then published a new verse translation of the same tragedy. True, he added three scenes to the end of Act Five. Since they are suitable to show the taste of Philips' nation, I will indicate what they contain.[17] In the first added scene, Phoenix appears with a large entourage, which he orders to pursue Orestes. In the second, Andromache returns to the stage, but not as Racine has her return in the first edition of his tragedy, that is, as a prisoner of Orestes, taking her to Sparta [Published in 1668, p. 86]. Rather, she returns to promise to the corpse of Pyrrhus, that has been carried on to the stage, all of the care of a woman afflicted and distraught by the death of her husband. In the third

13 "Here is our Nation that since the time of Francis I to the present time has been most cultivated; with what discernment, through its finest critics, does it express its opinion on plays; and with what distinction does it propose those opinions that are blindly and without any kind of discernment received and spread throughout all the theatres, and translated with the adornment of new flashy ideas and the most romantic expressions and other, more pompous expressions, [all of] which forever detach people's minds and language from the rules of Nature and of reason."

14 Du Bos mistakenly gives the date of Philips' translation as 1678.

15 John Crowne (1641–ca. 1712), English playwright. He emigrated to North America for a time, living in Nova Scotia and then studying at Harvard College, before returning to England and making a career in the theatre.

16 Ambrose Philips (1674–1749), English poet and politician.

17 The translation of these scenes is at the end of the Book Three in Du Bos' original text, although they are not included in this edition.

of these scenes, Andromache, hearing the clash of arms that accompanies the proclamation of her son Astyanax, gives herself over to feelings suitable to her character.

I speak here of translations that are presented as such. For English translators often do not want to be translators and want to present their copies as originals. How many times has Dryden, in the judgement of his compatriots [Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 131],[18] copied French works that that he passes off as his own creations? But these details begin to tire the reader.

The Germans want to have in their language a lot of the works of good French poets, though these translations are less necessary than for others, since they do us the honour of very often speaking our language. It is very common for them to write to each other in French. Several Princes use this language to conduct correspondence with their ministers, though both of them are native born Germans.

In Holland, everyone who has some education knows how to speak French from their youth. The state uses this language on many occasions, and even applies its great seal to laws written in French. Nevertheless, the Dutch have translated our good works, mainly the dramatic ones. They have intended, so to speak, to naturalize them as Flemish.

Count Ericeira,[19] the worthy heir of Livy in his country, has translated Boileau's *Art of Poetry* into Portuguese. Finally, our neighbours did not translate the tragedies of Jodelle and Garnier. During the reign of Henry IV, troupes of French actors did not roam Holland, Poland, Germany, the North, and some states of Italy, performing the plays of Hardy and Chrétien.[20] Today, troupes of French actors are permanently established in foreign countries.

The votes of our neighbours, as free and as disinterested as the votes of posterity could be, seem to be a guarantee of its approval. Boileau's praise for Molière and Racine will win over as many votes in the future as they have procured among our contemporary English and Italians.

One cannot say that the fashionableness of French for the past seventy years is the cause of the fashionableness our poets have in foreign countries. For-

18 Gerard Langbaine (1656–1692), English biographer and critic. *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford: 1691).

19 Francisco Xavier de Menezes, Count of Ericeira (or Ericeyra) (1673–1743), Portuguese poet, man of letters, and soldier. He wrote an epic poem and translated Boileau.

20 Alexandre Hardy (ca. 1550–1623), prolific French playwright. Du Bos possibly refers to Chrétien de Troyes (fl. late-12th century), French poet.

eigners themselves say that our poems and books, more than anything else, have given the language in which they are written such currency. It has nearly eclipsed Latin as the language that nations learn, by a tacit convention, to make themselves understood. Today we can say of French what Cicero said of Greek. *Graeca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus, Latina suis finibus exiguis sane continentur* [*Orat. For Arch.*].[21] When a German minister goes to negotiate with an English minister or a Dutch minister, there is no question about which language will be employed at their meetings. The choice was made a long time ago. They speak French. Foreigners even complain that our language invades, so to speak, living languages. It introduces its works and phrases in place of old expressions. Germans and Dutch say that the use their citizens make of words, especially French verbs, in speaking Dutch and German, corrupts their languages, as Ronsard corrupted French by introducing words and phrases from learned languages into his verse. *The Examiner*[22] was a publication that, thirty years ago, appeared several times each week. It reported that French has been so widely introduced into English that, when speaking of military matters, the English cannot understand accounts of sieges and battles that their compatriots write in English. The Abbot Gravina had made a similar complaint about Italian in his book on tragedy. It is possible that the great writers of our nation anticipate for our language the fate of literary Greek and Latin. That is, if it ever becomes a dead language, it will become a learned language.

But, someone will say, could it happen that future critics notice in the writings that we admire flaws so great that these works become works despised by posterity?

I respond that the subtlest remarks of the greatest philosophers would not deprive our poets of an iota of their reputation. This is because these remarks, even when they are correct, do not deprive our poetry of the attractiveness and charms in virtue of which they please all readers. If the flaws that critics identify are sins against the art of poetry, they will only learn the cause of an effect that we already feel. Those who had seen *El Cid* before the criticisms of the Académie française appeared, had sensed some flaws in this poem, even if they could not distinctly say what those flaws were. If these faults concern other sciences, if they are sins against geography or astronomy, we will be obliged to the censors who make them known. But they will scarcely diminish the reputation

21 Cicero, *For Archias* 10.23: "Greek poetry is read among all nations, Latin is confined to its own natural limits."

22 *The Examiner* was an English newspaper founded in 1710. It was the mouthpiece of conservative politics. Its most famous contributor was Jonathan Swift, who edited the paper for thirty-three issues.

of the poet, which is not based on his verses being free of apparent faults, but on their being interesting to read. My point is conditional on the criticism being good. But on the basis of past experience, there will be a hundred worthless ones for every good one.

It is certainly easier not to make ill-founded remarks when dealing with poems by familiar authors. These poems speak of things that one has seen or of which a still recent tradition preserves explanations. It will be more difficult in the future when all of these illuminations are extinguished by time and the change to which societies are subject. The criticisms that are currently presented against our modern poets turn on errors into which they have supposedly fallen, in speaking of physics or astronomy. These remarks often show that the censors want to find errors, not that the poets have made them. Let us mention one example.

Boileau wrote his *Epistle to Mr. de Guilleragues* in about 1675, when the new physics was the fashionable science: in France, there are fashions in science as well as in clothes. Then even women studied the new systems, taught in the vulgate by several people in Paris. It is easy to believe that Molière, who wrote *Learned Women* in about 1672, and who often put in the mouths of his heroines the doctrines and style of the new physics, attacked the excesses of a reigning style in his comedy. He made fun of people's daily follies. When Boileau wrote his *Epistle to Mr. de Guilleragues*, conversations about physics often returned to the topic of sunspots, by means of which astronomers observed that this star rotates on its axis approximately every twenty-seven days. One of these *macules* disappeared, making a lot of noise even on Parnassus. Wits said in their verses that the sun got rid of its spots, in order to make itself more similar to the late King, who had taken the sun as the body of his coat of arms.[23]

In these circumstances, Boileau, in order to speak poetically, despite the prevailing taste, devoted himself to the study of the human rather than the physical. This is appropriate for a satirical poet. He wrote to a friend that he left to others the study of several questions that physics addresses. Let others, he said, ask,

> Whether the sun is fixed or rotates on its axis.[24]

Clearly, the poet only means here to ask whether the sun is found at the centre of the solar system and whether or not it turns on its axis. The construction

23 Louis XIV was known as the Sun King.

24 *Épistre à M. de Guilleragues*, 29.

of the sentence proves that it has only one meaning, and this is the prima facie meaning. However, several critics have interpreted this line as saying that the author intended to say that the Copernican[25] system, which holds that the planets orbit the sun, which is at the center of the solar system, is opposed to the view that the sun turns on its axis. If this is what Boileau meant, he was wrong. The opinion of those who believe that the sun turns on its axis, and the opinion of those who believed, prior to recent research, that the globe of the sun is stationary at the centre of the solar system, both held that the sun is at the centre of the solar system, where Copernicus said it was. Thus, Perrault objected to Boileau, already thirty years ago: "That those who hold that the sun is fixed and immovable are the same people who maintain that it turns on its axis, and that these are not different opinions, as the line appears to say." It is true, adds Perrault some lines later, that, "it is not appropriate for such a great poet to be ignorant of the arts and sciences of which he speaks" [Preface of *L'Apologie des femmes* [(Paris: 1694)], p. 7]. But it is not Boileau's fault if Perrault misunderstands. And it is even less his fault if other censors are pleased to understand by these words, "Whether the sun is fixed or rotates on its axis," that he intended to contrast the Copernican system with Ptolemy's,[26] which supposes that the sun turns around the earth. Boileau has said a hundred times that he had only dreamed of contrasting the beliefs of those, who hold that the sun turns on its axis, with the beliefs of those who deny that it turns on its axis. The line said this clearly enough to have no need of interpretation.

Similar injustices will not diminish the reputation of our poets, since many more numerous injustices have not diminished the reputations of the ancients. They wrote in dead languages, and many things of which they spoke are today imperfectly known only by the most learned. Consequently, we can without temerity believe that their censors are often very wrong, even on the many occasions when we do not know how to prove that they have no grounds.

Thus, we can promise without temerity the fate of Virgil, Horace, and Cicero to the French writers who bring honour to the era of Louis the Great. That is, they will be regarded at all times and by all nations to come as holding a rank among the great people whose works are regarded as the most precious products of the human mind.

25 Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Polish astronomer and mathematician who developed the heliocentric view of the universe.

26 Claudius Ptolemy (ca. 100–170), mathematician, astronomer and natural scientist who lived in Alexandria at the time of the Roman Empire. He promoted a geocentric view of the universe, which was the predominant view until the challenge from Copernicus.

CHAPTER 33

That Veneration for Good Authors of Antiquity Will Last Forever. Whether It Is True That We Reason Better Than the Ancients.

But, someone will say, is it not possible that these great men will be downgraded? Could not the veneration that people have had for the ancients become, in a time more enlightened than times that have been pleased to admire them, a simple admiration? Does not Virgil's reputation run the risk of having the same fate as Aristotle's? Is not the *Iliad* liable to suffer one day the fate of the Ptolemaic theory, of which the world is today disabused? Our critics put these poems and other works to a test that they have never faced. They analyse according to the geometrical method, a method suited to discovering flaws that have escaped earlier censors. The weapons of ancient critics were not as sharp as ours. Judging by the current state of the natural sciences, our era is already much more enlightened than the eras of Plato, Augustus, and Leo X. The perfection we have reached in the art of reasoning, by which we make so many discoveries in the natural sciences, is a fertile source of new insights. These insights are already spreading to the *belles lettres*, and they will make old prejudices disappear, as they have made them disappear in the natural sciences. These insights will even extend to the various professions in life, and already we see a glimmering in all parts of society. Perhaps even the generation immediately after ours, struck by the enormous flaws in Homer and his fellow adventurers, will disdain them, as a reasonable person disains the juvenile stories that amused him in childhood.

Our era may be more learned than the illustrious eras that have preceded it, but I deny that today's minds have, generally speaking, more penetration, more correctness, and more exactitude than minds had in those eras. The most erudite people are not always the most sensible. Similarly, the most learned eras are not always the most rational. Good sense is at issue here, since it is a matter of judgement. In all questions where the facts are generally known, a person does not judge better than another because he is more learned. Rather, he does so because he has more sense, or a sharper mind.

Consider the conduct of great and common people, over the past seventy years, in all the nations of Europe in which the sciences that improve human reason have most flourished. It cannot be proved with certainty that their minds are more correct than people had in the preceding eras, or that people

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_088

are more rational than their ancestors. This date, seventy years, for the period of the supposed renewal of minds is ill chosen. I do not want to enter into the tawdry details in each state and all individuals. I will content myself by saying that the philosophical spirit that makes people so rational and, so to speak, so *impactful*, will soon do to much of Europe what the Goths and Vandals used to do, supposing that it continues to make the progress it has for the past seventy years. The practical arts are neglected, the doctrines most useful for the preservation of society are abolished, and speculative reasoning is preferred to practice. We conduct ourselves without regard for experience, the best teacher that humankind has. We have the imprudence to act as if we are the first generation that knows how to reason. Care of posterity is completely neglected. All of the investment that our ancestors made in buildings and goods will be lost to us. We would no longer find in forests wood for building, or even heating, if our ancestors had been rational in the way that we are.

Kingdoms and republics, someone will say, must ruin either the people who have lent them money, or the people who support these states by means of labour that they can no longer continue, once they are reduced to indigence. Individual people act as if their enemies are their heirs and the present generation conducts itself as if it must be the last offshoot of humanity. However, this does not stop us from being the more rational when it comes to the sciences than everyone who has preceded us. They have surpassed us, if I may use this expression, in *practical reasoning*, but we have surpassed them in *speculative reasoning*.[1] We judge the superiority of mind and reason that we have over people of past times by reference to the current state of the natural sciences, compared to their state in past times.

True, I will respond, the natural sciences are more advanced today than they were in the times of Augustus and Leo X. One could not overstate the case for the natural sciences or give too much honour to their trustees. But this is not because we think more correctly or reason better than people of those periods. It is not because minds have been, so to speak, regenerated. The only cause of the perfection of the natural sciences or, to speak more precisely, the only cause that makes these sciences less imperfect today than they were in previous times, is that we know more facts than they knew then. Time and chance have, over the years led us to an infinity of discoveries. I will show that reason has had very little role here, and these discoveries have shown the falsity of

1 Practical reason, or *phronesis*, is means-end reasoning that is involved in day-to-day life decision-making. Speculative reason refers on the contrary to reasoning about abstract entities, such as mathematics or metaphysics.

several philosophical *doctrines* that our predecessors substituted for the truth. People were not capable of knowing this prior to these discoveries.

This is, in my view, the solution to a problem so often posed: why do our poems and orators not surpass those of antiquity, as our scholars in natural studies surpass the scientists of antiquity? We owe to time all of the advantages we have over the ancients when it comes to the natural sciences. It has brought to light several facts of which the ancients were ignorant, and for which they substituted false opinions that led them to draw a hundred bad conclusions. The same advantage that time has given us over the ancients, it will give to our descendants. It is enough that one era comes after another for it to reason better in the natural sciences, unless society has been subjected to an upheaval sufficient to extinguish, to the disadvantage of its offspring, the enlightenment of their ancestors.

But, someone will object, does not reason contribute a lot to the expansion of new discoveries? I agree, since I do not deny that we reason correctly, I only deny that we reason with more correctness than the Greeks and Romans did. I am content to maintain that they would have made equally good use as we did of the important truths that chance has revealed to us if, so to speak, chance had been pleased to reveal these truths to them. I support my hypothesis on the grounds that they reasoned as well as us concerning things that they knew as well as us. Moreover, we only reason better than them in matters on which we are better informed than them, either by experience or by revelation, that is, in the natural sciences and in the various branches of theology.

In order to prove that we reason better than the ancients, it would be necessary to show that we owe our knowledge of truths of which they were ignorant to the correctness of our reasoning and not to lucky experiences. We are not obliged to scientists who have, by systematic research and the aid of the vaunted art of inferring conclusions, discovered the most important truths about the natural world. The opposite is true. These inventions and original discoveries, so to speak, are due only to chance. We profit from them only insofar as we are latecomers.

Firstly, I shall not be reproached for denying to scientists and scholars, who systematically research the secrets of nature, credit for all of the inventions of which they are not the recognised authors. I can deny scientists the honour of all discoveries made three hundred years ago and which have not been published under the name of some scholar. Since scholars and their friends write, the public is soon informed of their discoveries, and we soon learn to which illustrious person they owe even insignificant debts. Thus I can deny scientists credit for the invention of lock sluices, which have been around for two hundred years. These not only have an endless usefulness in commerce, but have

also given rise to a lot of publication on the nature and motion of water. I can deny that scientists are the inventors of the watermill and windmill as well as the pendulum clock, which has greatly aided all kinds of observations by providing a consistent means of accurately measuring time. They did not discover gunpowder, which has given rise to so many observations on the nature of air. Nor are they responsible for several other inventions whose authors are not known with certainty, but which have contributed a lot to the development of the natural sciences.

Secondly, I can present positive proofs of my hypothesis. I can demonstrate that systematic research has had no role in four discoveries that have most contributed to making our era superior to previous ones in the natural sciences. These four discoveries are ascertaining air pressure, the compass, printing, and the telescope. All are owed to experience and chance.

Printing, the art so valuable to the advancement of all sciences, which becomes more valuable as knowledge increases, was discovered in the 15th century. This was nearly two hundred years before Descartes, who passes for the father of the new philosophy, published his *Meditations*. The inventor of printing is a matter of dispute, but no one gives the honour to a philosopher [Polydore Virgil, *De inventoribus rerum*, Book 3, Chapter 7].[2] Besides, this inventor lived at a time when he could only know the art of reasoning as it was taught in the schools, an art that modern philosophers haughtily distain.[3]

It seems that the compass was known from the 13th century on. But whether Jean Goya, a sailor from Melphi,[4] or someone before him discovered the use of the compass, its inventor has always been similar to the inventor of printing [i.e., unknown and not a philosopher]. The knowledge that magnets always point towards the North Pole, and the knowledge that it can transfer this property to iron, has been the source of many insights to those who study physics. Besides, once the compass was invented, it was necessary that the art of naviga-

2 Polydore Virgil, also known as Polydorus Virgilius (ca. 1470–1555), Italian historian, diplomat, and priest. Virgil passed the bulk of his life in England, where he published *De Inventoribus Rerum* (1499), a history of inventions. This book was reprinted many times in the course of the sixteenth century and subsequently.

3 Du Bos refers to scholastic logic, which was based on Aristotelian logic with medieval developments, such as the theory of consequences. It continued to be taught in European universities until the appearance of new logical textbooks based on alternative logical systems (albeit still fundamentally Aristotelian) began to emerge.

4 Du Bos refers to Flavio Gioja d'Amalfi (fl. ca. 1300), to whom some early writers attributed the invention of the compass. For some reason he became known as Jean Goya of Melphi. Amalfi and Melfi are towns in southern Italy. See, Arabella B. Buckley, *A Short History of Natural Science* (London: 1876), 53.

tion be perfected and that Europeans sooner or later make the discoveries, that were absolutely impossible without similar assistance, that they have made since the end of the 15th century. These discoveries, of America and other unknown countries, have enriched botany, astronomy, medicine, zoology, and, in short, all of the natural sciences. The Greeks and Romans have given us no reason to believe that they were not capable of arranging in classes, and subdividing into *genera*, the new plants that they would have brought from America and the extremities of Asia and Africa. They could have charted the constellations of the southern hemisphere.

At the beginning of the 17h century, Jacob Metius of Alkmaar,[5] while searching for something else, invented the telescope. It seems that fate takes pleasure in mortifying modern scientists. Before the time that scientists regard as the beginning of the scientific revolution, it caused the chance that gave rise to the invention of the telescope. In the eighty years since minds became precise and penetrating, no one has made a discovery as important as that of which we speak. The sources of knowledge of the natural world that were hidden from the ancients were opened before the time at which the sciences supposedly began to acquire the perfection that gives so much honour to those who pursue them.

Jacob Metius, the inventor of the telescope was, according to Descartes, very ignorant [*Dioptrique*, ch. 1].[6] Descartes lived for a long time in the province where the invention happened, and he wrote about it thirty years later. Chance was pleased to give Jacob Metius the honour of creating this invention. By itself, it has done more to improve the natural sciences than all of the speculations of philosophers. It is preferable to anything his father and brother, who were great mathematicians, did. Jacob Metius did not discover the telescope by systematic research, but by a lucky experience. He was amusing himself by using lenses to set fires.

After the invention of the telescope, nothing was easier than discovering microscopes. With the assistance of these instruments, observations have been made that have enriched astronomy and natural history and made these sciences better today than they were in the past. These instruments have even played a role in observations in which they are not used. This is because these observations would never have been attempted, if previous observations, made with the instruments of which I speak, had not suggested that they be tried.

5 Jacob (or Jacobus) Metius (1571–1624 or later), Dutch lens grinder and an early developer of the telescope (1608).

6 *Dioptrics* (1637), Descartes' most important work on optics.

The effects of such a discovery endlessly multiply. After they had perfected astronomy, astronomy perfected other sciences. It has perfected, for example, geography by establishing lines of longitude with certainty and, nearly as easily, lines of latitude could formerly be specified. Since the progress of experience is not sudden, it was necessary for eighty years, after the invention of the telescope, to elapse before the star planisphere and Delisle's map of the world,[7] the first maps on which the principal points of the earth were placed in their correct locations. The telescope easily, after Galileo[8] used it to observe the stars, gave the width of the Atlantic Ocean. All geographers who made maps before Delisle were off by several degrees. Africa and South America were discovered 200 years ago, but it has only been fifty years since the huge mistake about the distance between them was corrected. It has not been long since the correct width of the ocean, usually called the South Sea, between Asia and America was found. The philosophical mind and theoretical physicists made no use of propositions. A man whose profession was to make maps made effective use of experience. Perhaps the Greeks and Romans would have benefited sooner than us from the telescope. Positions of places, and the distances between them, that they knew, make this a fair supposition. Delisle found more errors by modern geographers than they had to blame on the ancients. He showed that modern geographers were mistaken when they held that the ancients were wrong about the distance between Sicily and Africa, and wrong about some other geographical matters as well.

The discovery of air pressure is last of the discoveries that have led to the enrichment of the natural sciences. This discovery saved our scientists from all of the errors into which those who are ignorant of it have fallen, because they have attributed to the horror of a vacuum the effects of air pressure.[9] It has also given rise to the invention of barometers and all of the other instruments or machines that operate in virtue of air pressure. These have led to the discovery of a large number of truths about nature.

The famous Galileo [Died in 1641] noted that suction pumps raised water thirty-two inches. Ignorant of the fortuitous discovery of which I will speak, Galileo, like his predecessors, and like most contemporary scientists, attributed this rise of the water, contrary to the movement of massive objects, to the horror

7 Guillaume Delisle (1675–1726), French cartographer. He produced accurate maps of Europe and the Americas.

8 Galileo Gallilei (1564–1642), great Italian physicist, astronomer, engineer, and a key figure in the scientific revolution. In 1609, Galileo heard about the telescopes being built in the Netherlands and constructed his own. He was among the first to turn a telescope to the night sky.

9 See Book Two, p. 527n2.

of a vacuum. In 1643, Torricelli, an engineer in the employ of Grand Duke Ferdinand II made an observation while attempting to make some experiments. He noticed that when a tube with a closed upper opening and an open lower opening, was standing upright in a beaker full of mercury, the mercury remained suspended at a certain height in the tube. The suspended mercury completely fell into the beaker if the upper opening of the tube was opened. This was the first experiment devoted to this matter, and it was called the experiment of the vacuum. Its consequences have made it famous [*Saggi di naturali esperienze fatte nell'Accademia del Cimento* p. 23].[10] Torricelli thought his experiment was provocative. He reported it to his friends, but without reporting the actual cause, which he did not yet know.

Fr. Mersenne,[11] a minim in Paris, whose name was so famous among the philosophers of that time, learned about this experiment from some letters from Italy in 1644, and he shared the information with all of France. Petit and Pascal,[12] the father of the author of *Provincial Letters*, made several experiments as a result of Torricelli's experiment. Pascal Jr. also made some, and he published his experiments in a work published in 1647.[13] No one had yet thought of explaining these results by reference to air pressure. This is an incontestable proof that people did not reach this truth by going step by step from one principle to another, in a speculative manner. Experiments have fortuitously given knowledge to scientists, and they so little imagined that air has mass that, so to speak, they held the mass of air in their hands without understanding it. The truth was presented to them by chance, and it seems that they also recognized it by chance.

From the writings of eyewitnesses, we know for certain that Pascal had no conception of air pressure until after he published his book [Preface to *Traitez de l'équilibre des liqueurs*].[14] It finally occurred to Torricelli on the basis of his experiments. Pascal found Torricelli's explanation to be attractive, but it was only a conjecture, so he made several experiments to confirm its truth or falsity.

---

10 (Florence: 1666), 23. Title corrected.

11 Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), Minim Friar, mathematician, theologian, music theorist, and philosopher. He was a prominent figure in early-17th-century scientific circles.

12 Étienne Pascal (1588–1651), French tax official with an interest in science and mathematics.

13 Blaise Pascal, *Experiences nouvelles touchant le vide* (1647).

14 Blaise Pascal, *Traitez de l'équilibre des liqueurs et de la pesanteur de la masse de l'air* [Treatise on the equilibrium of liquids and air pressure] (Paris: 1663). The Preface to this posthumous publication was written by Pascal's literary executors, after his death. Title corrected.

One of his tests was the famous experiment made on the Puy de Dôme[15] in 1648. Finally, Pascal wrote his *Traitez de l'équilibre des liqueurs et de la pesanteur de la masse de l'air*, which has since been reprinted several times. Subsequently, von Guericke, Burgermeister of Magdeburg, and Boyle[16] discovered the pneumatic pump. Others invented instruments that indicate the changes that variations in time bring about in air pressure. [An understanding of] the rarefaction of air has even given insights into the rarefaction of other liquids. We can judge from this narrative, the truth of which no one can contest, whether enlightened doubts and speculation of scientists, led them from principle to principle, until they reached the experiments that revealed air pressure. In truth, the part that reason played in this discovery does not deserve a lot of credit.

I will not speak of inventions unknown to the ancients, whose inventors are known. An example is diamond cutting, which was discovered by a goldsmith from Bruges, during the reign of Louis XI [By Bercken, *Hist. des pierres précieuses*, p. 15].[17] Before then, coloured stones were preferred to diamonds. None of them was a philosopher, even an Aristotelian philosopher.[18] From what I have said it is apparent that the knowledge that we have of natural science, and the ancients lacked, and the veracity of our reasoning concerning several questions of physics, truths that the ancients did not know, are due to chance and fortuitous experience. The discoveries that have been made by this means have taken a long time to germinate, so to speak. It was necessary that one discovery had to wait for another, in order to produce all of the fruit that it could provide. An experiment was not sufficiently conclusive without another, which was made a long time after the first. The latter inventions have cast a marvellous light on the information that we already had. Fortunately for our era, it is located in the fullness of time, when progress in the natural sciences has been

15 An extinct volcano in central France, elevation 1465 m. The idea for the 1648 experiment was Pascal's but it was undertaken by Florin Périer (1605–1672), Pascal's brother-in-law and husband of Gilberte Pascal.

16 Otto von Guericke (1602–1686), German scientist and burgermeister. He published the results that ensued from his invention of a vacuum pump in Book III of his *Experimenta Nova* (Amsterdam: 1672). Robert Boyle (1627–1691), Anglo-Irish scientist, member of the Royal Society, and founder of modern chemistry. He read about von Geuricke's experiment in 1657 and improved on his design. His results were published in *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, Touching the Spring of the Air, and its Effects* (Oxford: 1660).

17 Du Bos seems to refer to Anselme Boece de Boot, *Le parfaict ioailler, ou, Histoire des pierreries précieuses* (Lyon: 1644). However, Bercken is not mentioned on p. 15 of this work. Lodewyk van Bercken (fl. late-15th century), Flemish jeweller and diamond cutter. He invented the scaif.

18 An Aristotelian philosopher is one who had not adopted the new philosophical ideas of Descartes or the ideas of the scientific revolution.

quickest. The insights resulting from the preceding inventions, after having separately made some progress, began to come together eighty or a hundred years ago. We may say of our era what Quintilian said of his. *Tot nos praeceptoribus, tot exemplis instruxit antiquitas, ut possit videri nulla sorte nascendi aetas felicior quam nostra, cui docendae priores elaborarunt* [*Inst*. bk. 12, ch. 22].[19]

For example, the human body was well enough understood at the time of Hippocrates[20] for him to provide a vague notion of the circulation of blood. But the notion was insufficiently developed to give that great man a grasp of the truth [Almeloveen, *Inventa nov-antiqua*].[21] His writings indicate that he guessed rather than understood the matter and that he was far from being able to explain it to his contemporaries and he did not understand it very well himself. Servetus, well known for his piety and his torture [He was executed at Geneva in 1553],[22] coming several eras after Hippocrates, had a much more distinct notion of the circulation of blood. He described it fairly clearly in the Preface to the second edition of his book, for which Calvin had him burned [Wotton, Pref. to *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*].[23] Harvey[24] came sixty years after Servetus and was able to give an even clearer explanation of the main facts of circulation. Most scholars of his time were persuaded by his views. It was as firmly and widely established as a scientific truth as something that is not directly observed can be. That is, it was regarded as a view more probable than the contrary opinion.

The faith of the public in philosophical reasoning goes no further. Either by instinct, or by principle, people always strictly distinguish between the certainty of natural truths, known by the senses, and the certainty of such truths known by means of reasoning. The latter appear to be mere probabilities. In

19 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.11.22: "Antiquity has supplied us with all these teachers and models, so that one might well think that there is no age better to be born in than ours, for whose instruction previous ages have worked so hard."

20 Hippocrates (460–370 BC), Greek physician. He is considered the most important medical doctor of antiquity.

21 (Amsterdam: 1684). Theodorus Janssonius van Almeloveen (1657–1712), Dutch medical doctor and scholar.

22 Michael Servetus or, in his native Spanish, Miguel Serveto (1509 or 1511–1553), Spanish theologian, humanist, and scientist. He described the circulation of blood in *Christianismi restitutio* [Restoration of Christianity] (1553). Servantus opposed the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and for this was condemned to death by the Geneva city council.

23 William Wotton (1666–1727), English theologian and scholar, best remembered for the book Du Bos cites, a contribution to the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns (1694).

24 William Harvey (1578–1657), English physician who made important contributions to anatomy. In particular, he was the first to completely describe the circulation of blood.

order to convince them fully of these truths, it is necessary, at least, to be able to put some key fact within reach of their senses. Thus, though most physicians and a majority of the public were persuaded in 1687 that the circulation of blood is certain, nevertheless a lot of scholars, with their own following, maintain that the circulation of blood is only an illusion. In the School of Medicine at the University of Paris, theses against the circulation of blood were presented in that same year. Finally, microscopes are so improved, and have been made so powerful, that with their aid, blood can be seen flowing rapidly through arteries towards the extremities of a fish, and returning more slowly towards the centre through the veins, as distinctly as the Rhône and Saône can be seen in Lyon, flowing in their beds. No one would today present a thesis against the circulation of blood. True, not everyone who now believes in the circulation of blood has seen it with his own eyes. But they know that it no longer relies on reasoning for its proof and that it is demonstrated by experience. To repeat, people have much more confidence in those who tell them "I have seen" than in those who tell them "I have concluded." The doctrine of the circulation of blood, by the insights that has provided into the circulation of other liquids, and by discoveries to which it has given rise, has contributed more than any other observation to progress in anatomy. It has even led to progress in other sciences, such as botany. Can it be denied that the circulation of blood opened the eyes of Perrault, the doctor, concerning the circulation of sap in trees and plants? Judge for yourself what part the philosophical spirit, born a hundred years ago, played in the proof of this doctrine.

The truth, the doctrine, if it is permitted to speak so, of the movement of the earth around the sun has had the same fate as has the doctrine of the circulation of blood. Several ancient philosophers knew this truth, but they did not have the means we have today to prove it. So, it remained undecided whether Philolaus, Aristarchus,[25] and other astronomers had grounds to believe that the earth orbits the sun, or whether Ptolemy and his followers had grounds to believe that the sun orbits the earth. It even seemed that the system usually called the Ptolemaic system had prevailed. Then, in the 16th century, Copernicus attempted to support Philolaus' view with what were apparently new

25 Philolaus of Croton (ca. 470–385 BC), Greek philosopher and scientist. He developed an early non-geocentric model of the universe, but it was not heliocentric. Aristarchus of Samos (ca. 310–ca. 230 BC), Greek astronomer and mathematician. He was influenced by Philolaus but developed a genuinely heliocentric mode of the universe.

proofs, based on observation. Opinion was divided again. Tycho Brahe[26] put forward a compromise system that incorporated astronomical facts known with certainty and the opinion that earth is immobile. About that time, sailors began to explore our globe. Some time after that it was known that an east wind prevails in both hemispheres. This was a physical proof of the belief that the earth turns on its axis every twenty-four hours and, at the same time, goes around the Zodiac in a year. Some years later, the telescope was invented. With the aid of this new instrument, conclusive observations of Venus and other planets showed so much resemblance between the earth, and other planets that orbit the sun while rotating on their axes, that everyone today is convinced of the truth of the Copernican system. Sixty years ago, no professor of the University of Paris dared to teach this system. Nearly all teach it today, at least as the only hypothesis that can explain astronomical facts that are known with certainty. When these true principles were still not established, scholars, instead of starting from this point and making new discoveries, wasted time fighting with one another. They tried to support the opinion that they had adopted, either by choice or chance, with purely rational proofs that cannot be good and solid. The natural sciences made nearly no progress. But once these truths had been established, they led us by the hand to an endless number of additional truths. Sensible scientists then usefully employ their time advancing knowledge by experiments. If our predecessors did not have the information that we have, this is because they lacked the thread that guides us through the labyrinth.

In fact, the good sense, penetration, and breadth of mind that the ancients displayed in their law, history, and even in philosophical questions, obliges us to think that their reason was as capable as ours of making use of the great truths that experience has revealed in the past two hundred years. In philosophy, because of a natural human weakness to which we are always subject, they did not give their attention to truths that they could not have known in their time. Accidents, which have revealed them to us, had not yet occurred. Not to leave our subject, did the ancients not know as well as us that superiority of reason, that we call a philosophical turn of mind, must preside over all of the arts and sciences? Did they not recognize that it is a necessary guide? Have they not explicitly said that philosophy is the mother of the valuable arts?[27] *Neque enim te fugit*, Cicero said to his brother, *laudatarum omnium artium*

26 Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), Danish nobleman and astronomer. On his model, the sun and moon orbited a stationary earth, while the other planets orbited the sun.

27 Du Bos says "*beaux arts*" but he plainly does not mean the fine arts.

procreatricem quandam et quasi parentem eam, quam φιλοσοφιαν *Graeci vocant, ab hominibus doctissimis iudicari*.[28]

Let those who might consider responding to me before thinking, concluding that I have erred, pay attention and even reflect on this passage. One of the faults of our critics is that they reason before they have reflected. Let them also recall something that they appear to have forgotten concerning the study of geometry: *quae instruit etiam quos sibi non exercert*[29] and that Quintilian wrote a chapter devoted to the usefulness of the study of this science for orators. He clearly states that a difference between geometry and the other arts is that the other arts are only useful after they have been learned, but only the study of geometry has great utility because nothing is more suited to opening, extending, and strengthening the mind than geometrical method. *In geometria partem fatentur esse utilem teneris aetatibus. agitari namque animos et acui ingenia et celeritatem percipiendi venire inde concedunt, sed prodesse eam non ut ceteras artis, cum perceptae sint, sed cum discatur, existimant* [*Inst*. bk. 1, ch. 18].[30]

In good faith, to conclude that the ancients and we have a different sort of reason, or to be certain that our reason is superior to theirs on the grounds we are more advanced in the natural sciences, is like inferring that we are smarter than them since we know how to cure intermittent fevers with cinchona[31] and they could not. As is well known, the only credit that we can take for this cure is having learned from the Indians of Peru the power of the bark, that grows in their country.

Suppose that we are more capable than the ancients in some sciences, independently of fortuitous discoveries that chance and time have provided. If so, our superiority in those sciences has the same cause as a son dying richer than his father, supposing that their conduct has been the same, and fortune has

28 Cicero, *Orator* 1.3.9: "For indeed you cannot fail to remember that eminence in all fields is rare. The most learned men hold what the Greeks call 'philosophy' to be the creator and mother, as it were, of all the reputable arts."

29 Seneca the Elder, *Declamations* 2.3: "which improves even those whom it does not train for itself." Du Bos misquotes. Seneca the Elder is not actually talking about geometry in this passage, but eloquence. "*Tu eloquentiae tamen studeas: facilis ab hac in omnes artes discursus est: instruit etiam quose non sibi exercet*."

30 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.34: "As for geometry, it is admitted that some parts of it are useful for young children, because it exercises the mind, sharpens the wits, and generates quickness of perception. But it is thought that the advantages come not (as with other arts) when it has been learned, but only during the learning process." Quotation and citation corrected.

31 A shrub native to Peru. The bark is used to make quinine.

favoured them equally. If the ancients had not, so to speak, cultivated geometry, moderns, who have a genius for this science, would have had to devote their time and talents to cultivating it. And since they would not have started from such an advanced starting point, they would not have been able to advance it as much as they have. The Marquis de l'Hôpital, Leibniz, and Newton[32] could not have advanced geometry as much as they have if they had not found this science in an advanced state. It had come to this state having been successively cultivated by a large number of intelligent people. Later inquirers have profited from the insights and perspectives of their predecessors. Archimedes[33] born in the time of Newton would have accomplished what Newton has, as Newton would have done what Archimedes did, had he been born at the time of the Second Punic War. We can also maintain that the ancients would have used algebra in geometry, if they had had numerals as suited to numerical calculation as Arabic numerals are. With the aid of these numerals, Alfonso X,[34] King of Castile, made his astronomical tables in the 13th century.

It is also certain that we err in accusing ancient philosophers of ignorance. Most of their knowledge was lost together with the writings that contained it. When we have only a hundredth of the books by Greeks and Romans, we could well err in our estimate of the limits of their progress in natural science. Often critics only bring charges against the ancients out of ignorance. The fact that our era is more enlightened than preceding generations does not justify us in reproaching Pliny the Elder with errors and lies, as he was 150 years ago.

But, someone will reply, we must at least agree that today's logic, the art of thinking, is more advanced than was the logic of the ancients. It must follow as a necessary consequence that moderns who have learned this art, and who have internalized its rules, reason concerning all sorts of matters with greater precision than the ancients did.

---

32 Guillaume Françoise Antoine, Marquis de l'Hôpital (1661–1704), French mathematician. His book, *Analyse des Infiniment Petits pour l'Intelligence des Lignes Courbes* (1696), was an early exposition of infinitesimal calculus. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), English mathematician, and scientist. He is considered one of the greatest scientists of all time.

33 Archimedes of Syracuse (ca. 287–212 BC), Greek mathematician and scientist. He is considered one of the greatest mathematicians of all time.

34 Alfonso X (1220–1284), King of Castile, given the epithet 'the Wise'. A highly educated and cultivated man, he commissioned the preparation of the Alphonsine Tables, which allowed users to calculate positions of the sun, planets, and moon relative to the stars.

In the first place, I reply that it is not so certain that thinking is more advanced today than it was in ancient times. Most of the rules regarded as new are implicitly in Aristotle's logic. There we find the method of invention and the method of judgement.[35] Moreover, we do not have accounts of the rules that [ancient] philosophers taught to their followers. Perhaps we would find there things that we give ourselves credit for inventing, just as it happens that famous philosophers have found in [ancient] manuscripts parts of discoveries that they thought that they had made first. Still, suppose that logic is a little more advanced today than it used to be. It does not follow that scholars, in general, reason better than they reasoned in those times. The precision with which a person states his axioms, draws inferences, and links one conclusion to the next depends more on the nature of his mind, flighty or profound, daring or careful, than on the logic that he has learned. It makes no difference in practice if he has studied Barbay's logic or that of Port Royal.[36] The logic text that he has studied does not make, perhaps, as much difference to his manner of thinking as an ounce added or subtracted to a hundredweight. This science serves rather to teach us how we naturally reason and does not influence the practice that, as I have already said, depends on each person's individual mental character. Do we see that those who know the best logic text, *The Port Royal Logic*, and who teach logic professionally, reason more effectively, and make the most judicious choice of premises that lead to the conclusion that they want to prove? Does an eighteen-year old who knows by heart all the rules of syllogism and method[37] reason with more precision than a person of forty who has never known them, or who has completely forgotten them? After the natural character of the mind, experience, extent of insight, and knowledge of facts make a man reason better than another. The sciences in which the moderns reason better than the ancients are precisely those in which the moderns know a lot more than the ancients could know, born before the lucky discoveries of which I have spoken.

---

35 The *modus inveniendi*, or method of invention, was a term of art in medieval logic, which was based on Aristotelian logic. Aristotle's *Topics* provided lessons on how to find premises, which were organized by type of subject-matter (hence '*topica*,' or place or location in the mind as mnemonics), in order to derive conclusions in syllogistic reasoning. The *modus iudicandi*, or method of judgement, was the means of judging whether the conclusion was true and the argument as a whole was sound.

36 Pierre Barbay or Barbey (d. 1664), French Jesuit and philosopher. He was the author of the posthumously published *Commentarius in Aristotelis Logicam* (1675). *La logique, ou l'art de penser* (usually known as the *Port Royal Logic*) (1660), a famous logic text published by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, two Jansenists.

37 See footnote above on the *modus inveniendi* and *iudicandi*.

My second response to the objection, based on the advancement of logic, is that we do not reason better than the ancients in history, politics, and theories of justice. Speaking of writers from the less distant past, we have Commines, Machiavelli, de Mariana, Fra Paolo, de Thou, Davila, and Guiccardini.[38] They wrote when logic was no more advanced than it was in antiquity, and they wrote history as systematic and as sensible as any historian who has taken up a pen in the past sixty years. Do we have an author who could surpass Quintilian when it comes to the order and solidity of his reasoning? Finally, if it was true that the art of reasoning was currently more advanced than it was in antiquity, our philosophers would agree more among themselves than ancient philosophers did.

Someone will say to this that today we no longer permit the selection of premises that are not clear and well established. It is no longer permitted to draw a conclusion that does not follow clearly and distinctly from the premises.[39] Today, everyone would notice that a conclusion is too general for the premise from which it is drawn. We would treat the conclusion as we do ancient doctrines. A Chinese person who only knew our era from this picture would imagine that all of our scholars agree. There is one truth, he would say, and we can no longer go astray. All the routes by which one can go astray are closed. These routes are poorly selecting the premises of an argument or making bad inferences from them. What can go wrong? Thus, all scholars, of whatever profession, must reach the same conclusion. They must all agree on the subjects where the truth still cannot be known. All scholars must even be in agreement concerning the subjects where the truth cannot be known. However, no one ever argued as much as we do today. Our scholars, like ancient

38 Philippe de Commines (1447–1511), Franco-Flemish history and political critic. He is regarded as the first rigorous philosopher of modern times. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), a Florentine politician, diplomat, philosopher, and playwright, best known today as author of *The Prince*. Juan de Mariana (1536–1624), Spanish Jesuit and historian. He is the author of *Historiae de rebus Hispaniae*. The first twenty volumes appeared in 1582, and it was later expanded to more than thirty volumes. Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623), Venetian clergyman, statesman, scientist, and historian. His major historical work is *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* [History of the Council of Trent] (1619). Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), French historian; President of the Parlement of Paris. De Thou was the author of *Historia sui temporis*, a large-scale work divided into 138 books or chapters. The work was controversial and placed on the Papal *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* [List of Prohibited Books]. Enrico Caterinno Davila (1576–1631), Italian diplomat and historian. He was the author of *Historia delle guere civili di Francia* [History of the French Civil War] (Venice, 1630). Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), Italian historian and statesman; a friend of Niccolò Machiavelli.

39 Here Du Bos is alluding to Cartesian method.

philosophers, do not agree about the facts, and they mutually refute each other when it comes to what can be known by means of reason, by treating each other as blind people who choose not to see the light. If they no longer argue about some matters, facts and experience have forced them to agree on these points. I refer here to all the various professions that are called philosophy and to sciences that I dare not completely enumerate. It is necessary that philosophy and the sciences, guided by the same logic, are mistaken about the truth of their premises, have chosen the wrong premises for their subject; or have drawn the wrong conclusions. Those who boast so loudly about the insights that the philosophical spirit has spread in our era have a response. They could say that they understand by 'our era' only themselves and their friends, and that we must regard those who still do not agree with them as people who are not real philosophers, just as the ancients were not.

Time is the emblem of science in its present state. Time always reveals the truth, but does so little by little. If we see a greater portion of truth than did the ancients, this is because we have seen more than them. Only time makes us appear more successful. I conclude that works, whose reputations have withstood the remarks of past critics, will always be preserved, notwithstanding the subtle remarks of all future critics.

CHAPTER 34

That the Reputation of a Philosophical System Can Be Destroyed. That the Reputation of a Poem Cannot Be.

From the fact that school physics and the Ptolemaic system have been discredited,[1] it does not follow that Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid* can be discredited. Opinions whose prevalence and duration are based on individual sentiment, that is, on the interior experience of those who have adopted these opinions in all eras, are not subject to being discredited. In this, they are unlike philosophical opinions, whose prevalence and duration comes from the ease with which people adopt them on the basis of the testimony of others. People only espouse these views through confidence in the insights of others. Since the initial authors of a philosophical opinion can be mistaken, they can successively deceive generation after generation of their followers. Thus, it can happen that their descendants finally reject as erroneous philosophical doctrines that their ancestors had for a long time regarded as the truth, and that they had believed on the word of their teachers.

People, whose curiosity far exceeds their cognitive capacities, always want to know what to believe about the causes of various natural occurrences. However, most of them are incapable of investigating, or knowing by themselves, the truth of these matters, even if this truth were handed to them on a plate. On the other hand, there are always thinkers vain enough to believe that they have discovered these physical truths. Still others are insincere enough to claim that they clearly grasp these truths on the basis of evident principles, though they know that their ideas are only dim. Both of them become men capable of teaching. What happens? Inquiring minds accept as a truth whatever these people, who are for various reasons accepted as authorities, teach as the truth. They do so without knowing or even pursuing the merit and solidity of the proofs the teachers use to support their philosophical doctrines. The disciples believe that the teachers have a better grasp of the truth than others, and that they do not intend to deceive them. The first followers subsequently make more disciples,

1 Du Bos refers to scholastic or medieval physics, which was based nearly entirely on the study of Aristotle's *Physics* and *Meteorology*.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_089

who often believe that they are firmly convinced of a truth of which they have not grasped a single proof. In this manner, an infinity of false opinions on the influences of the stars, the sea's tides, the portentousness of comets, the causes of diseases, the organization of the human body, and several other physical questions, are established. In this manner, the theory of physics that is taught in the schools under the name of Aristotle's *Physics*, became generally received.

Consider any opinion on physics that rests on authority and reliance on the understanding of others. Neither the number of people who have adopted and defended such an opinion, nor the length of time that it has prevailed, count in its favour. Those who have adopted the opinion, have done so without examining it. Or, if they have examined it, their efforts have not been, perhaps, as fruitful as the efforts of those who, one day, make the same examination, and who have benefited from new discoveries and even the errors of their predecessors.

It follows that, in physics and other natural sciences, descendants do well not to hold to the opinions of their forbearers. So a wise person can very well rebel against principles of chemistry, botany, physics, medicine, and astronomy, that have for several centuries been regarded as incontestable truths. Such a person is permitted, especially if he can present some empirical evidence in support of his belief, to fight these principles. He may do so with as little modesty as if he attacked a four-day-old theory, one of the theories only believed by its author and his friends, who cease to believe it as soon as they tussle with him. No one knows how to use reason and speculation to establish an opinion so firmly that another person, more insightful or more fortunate, cannot overthrow. This is why the disposition of humankind in favour of some system of philosophy does not show that it must continue to have currency for the next thirty years. People can be disabused by the truth, just as they can go from one old mistake to a new mistake, more capable of deceiving them than the first.

Thus, nothing is more unreasonable than holding that the votes of eras and nations prove that a philosophical system is solid and will always remain popular. But the votes of eras and nations are a presumptive proof that a poem is excellent and that it will always be admired. A false theory can, as I have shown, beguile everyone and be current for several centuries. The same is not true if a poem is bad.

The reputation of a poem is established by the pleasure that it gives to those who read it. It is established by means of sentiment. The opinion that a poem is excellent could only take root, or be extended, with the assistance of an internal certainty originating in the individual experience of those who receive it. Thus, the time that a poem has lasted is evidence that shows this opinion is based on the truth. We even have good grounds for holding that generations to come will

be touched by reading a poem that has touched all past generations that can read it in the original language. This reasoning only assumes that people of all times and all countries have similar hearts.

Thus, people are not as inclined to be duped about poetical matters as they are about philosophical matters, and a tragedy would not, as a theory does, fare well without real merit. Thus, we see that people who do not agree about the truth of things that they examine by means of reason are in agreement about things of which we judge by means of sentiment. Nobody challenges these sorts of verdicts: that Raphael's *Transfiguration* is a marvellous picture and that *Polyeuctus* is an excellent tragedy. But everyday philosophers oppose philosophers who maintain that *The Search for Truth*[2] is a work that teaches the truth. If all philosophers do justice to the personal merit of Descartes, they are divided concerning the worth of his philosophical system. Besides, as we have already noted, people often adopt on the word of others the system that they subsequently teach. The public voice that speaks in the system's favour is only composed of echoes repeating what they have heard. The small number of people who express their own opinion, only express what they have discerned despite their prejudices, which is as strong in opposition to reason as it is weak in opposition to the senses. Those who speak of a poem, report what they have felt in reading it. Each has a vote that he casts on the basis of his own experience. His vote is cast on the basis of what he feels while reading. Everyone has a vote that he has formed on the basis of what he has sensed while reading. We cannot be misled about truths that are matters for sentiment, as we can be deceived about truths that can only be discovered by means of reason.

Not only are we not let astray when deciding matters that can be judged by sentiment, but it is not even possible that others can make us go astray in these matters. Sentiment rebels against someone who tries to make us believe that a poem will engage us when we have found it insipid. But sentiment is silent, to use this expression, when someone gives us a bad metaphysical reason for a good one. Only by reflection and mental effort, of which some are incapable through lack of intelligence and others through laziness, can we know falsehoods [in metaphysics] and winnow out error. We know without deliberating, we sense the contrary of everything that we are told by someone who wants to persuade us that a work that greatly pleases us, that it violates all of the rules established to make a work capable of pleasing. If we are not educated

2 Du Bos may refer to *La recherché de la vérité par la lumière naturelle* [The Search for Truth by Natural Light] (1701). This unfinished dialogue by Descartes was written ca. 1630, but not published until about seventy years later. Alternatively, he may refer to *Treatise Concerning the Search After Truth* (1674–1675), by Nicolas Malebranche.

enough to respond to his arguments, at least an internal revulsion prevents us from lending his arguments any credence. People are born convinced that any argument that attempts to persuade them, by means of reason, to believe the contrary of what they feel, can only be sophistry.

Thus the poem that has pleased all eras and all past peoples is truly worthy of pleasing, notwithstanding any noticeable faults. Consequently, it must always please those who understand the language in which it is written.

Someone will reply that prejudice is nearly as capable of seducing us in favour of a poetical work as in favour of a theory. For example, when we see those with whom we study, those who teach us during our childhood, admire the *Aeneid*, their admiration leaves in us a prejudice that makes us find it better than it really is. Their sentiments become ours. Virgil and authors that we usually call *classics* owe most of their reputation to this sort of prejudice. Critics could, then, harm that reputation by undermining the prejudices that exaggerate for us the merit of Virgil's *Aeneid* and make his *Eclogues* appear so superior to others that, in truth, are scarcely inferior. This argument will be supported by a systematic discussion of the prejudices with which people are imbued during childhood. This is a commonplace and well known to everyone.

I respond that prejudices such as the ones in question would not last long in the minds of those in whom they had been imbued, if these prejudices were not founded on the truth. Personal experience, the personal sentiments of these people, would soon disabuse them. Suppose that, during childhood and at a time when we still do not know other poems, an undeserved veneration for the *Aeneid* was inspired in us. We would shed this prejudice when we came to read other poems and compare them with the *Aeneid*. In vain we would have been told hundreds upon hundreds of times during our childhood that the *Aeneid* charms all readers. We would no longer believe that if it gave us only a modest amount of pleasure when we became capable of understanding it without assistance. In this way, all of the pupils of a university professor, who were taught that the speeches attributed to Quintilian are better than the orations of Cicero would shake off this prejudice when they were capable of understanding both works. False philosophical opinions that we have acquired at school can last forever. This is because we can only be disabused by means of a meditation that we are often incapable of making. But it would be enough to read the poets, whose merit has been exaggerated, to undo our prejudice, at least if we are not fanatics. When we are adults, we do not merely admire the *Aeneid* as we admired it in our childhood, when the huge authority of our teachers can impose on a mind that is not fully formed. Rather, we admire this poet even more, in proportion to the perfection of our taste and the extent of our understanding.

Moreover, it is easy to show, by reference to historical facts, that Virgil, and the other excellent poets of antiquity, did not owe to schools or to prejudices their first admirers. Only someone who does not extend his perspective beyond his time and place can advance this opinion. Virgil's contemporaries and compatriots were his first admirers: women and ordinary men. They were, perhaps, less educated than those who construct a story about the reputations of great poets, rather than studying the writings of which they speak. When the *Aeneid* appeared, it was soon a book of the backstreets, if it is still permitted to use this expression, rather than a textbook. The *Aeneid* was written in the living language. Women as well as men, the uneducated as well as the learned, read this poem, and judged it by the impressions that it made on them. At that time, Virgil's name was not imposing, and his book was subjected to all of the insults that a new book can encounter. Finally, Virgil's contemporaries judged the *Aeneid* as our fathers judged Boileau's *Satires* and the *Fables* of La Fontaine, while they were still novel. Thus, the impression that the *Aeneid* made on everyone, and the tears that women shed on hearing it, made its reputation as an excellent poem. This approval had already become admiration by the time of Quintilian, who wrote about ninety years after Virgil. Juvenal, a contemporary of Quintilian, reports that in his time people were already reading the *Eclogues*, Horace, and Virgil to children.

> *Dummodo non pereat totidem olfecisse lucernas*
> *Quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset*
> *Flaccus et haereret nigro fuligo Maroni.*
> [Juven. *Sat.* 7][3]

This admiration has always increased. Five hundred years after Virgil, at a time when Latin was still a living language, people spoke of this poet with as much veneration as the people most convinced of his merit can speak today. *The Institutes* of Justinian, the most respected of profane books, report that Romans always understood talk of 'the poet' as a reference to Virgil, just as Greeks always understood the same expression as referring to Homer. *Cum poetam dicimus nec addimus nomen, subauditur apud Graecos egregius Homerus, apud nos Vergilius* [*Inst.* bk. 1, ch. 2].[4]

---

3 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.225–227: "Just make sure that you get something for breathing the stink of as many lamps as there are boys, while your Horace gets totally discoloured and the soot sticks to your blackened Virgil."

4 Justinian, *Institutes* 1.2.1: "When we say 'poet' but do not specify the name, Homer is understood among the Greeks, Virgil among us." Justinian I (AD 482–565), emperor of the Eastern

Thus, Virgil does not owe his reputation to translators or commentators. He was admired before there was a need to translate his work and he owes his success to his first commentators. When Macrobius and Servius[5] commented on or explicated him in the 4th century, according to the most probable view, they could scarcely give him greater plaudits than he had received from the public. [Otherwise] these plaudits would have been denied by everyone, since Latin was still a living language among those for whom Macrobius and Servius wrote. The same thing can even be said about Eustathius, Asconius Pedianus, Donatus, Acronis,[6] and other ancient commentators, who published their commentaries when people still spoke the language of the Greek or Latin author whom they studied.

Finally, all of the new peoples that were formed in Europe after the barbarian destruction of the Roman Empire have ranked Virgil in the same way that contemporaries of the poet did. These peoples, so different from one another in language, religion, and customs, are united in the sentiment of veneration for Virgil. They have been from the time they began to be civilized and were capable of understanding him. They have not found the *Aeneid* to be an excellent poem because they were told at school to admire it. They had no such institutions. Since, in reading it, they found this poem to be excellent, they have decided to make its study part of the advanced education of their children.

As soon as the northern peoples were settled on the territory of the Roman Empire, as soon as they knew Latin, they had for Virgil the taste that the contemporaries of this lovely poet had always had for him. I will content myself with presenting one example. Theodoric, the first king of the Visigoths settled in Gaul, and a contemporary of Emperor Valentinian III, wanted his son Theodoric II to study Virgil. The later Theodoric wrote to the famous Avitus, proclaimed emperor in AD 455, who was pressing Theodoric to reach an agreement with the Romans.[7] "I am under too great an obligation to you to refuse

---

Roman Empire. The *Institutes*, or *Institutiones* in Latin, were part of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, a codification of Roman law undertaken during Justinian's reign.

5 Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, known as Marcobius (fl. AD 400), Latin philosopher and literary critic. Chapters 3–6 of his most important work, the *Saturnalia*, are devoted to Virgil; Maurus Servius Honoratus (fl. late-4th century, early-5th century), Roman man of letters. He is the author of *In Virgilii Aeneidem commentarii*, commentaries on Virgil.

6 Du Bos probably refers to Eustathius of Thessalonica (ca. 1115–ca. 1195), Archbishop of Thessalonica and scholar. He wrote a commentary on Homer; Asconius Pedianus (ca. 9 BC–AD 76), Roman historian. A defence of Virgil is attributed to him. Helenius Acronis (fl. ca. AD 200), Roman literary commentator.

7 Theodoric I (ca. 390–451), King of the Visigoths, 418–451. Flavius Placidius Valentinianus Augustus (419–455), Western Roman Emperor 425–455. The Empire continued to collapse

you anything. You taught me in my youth: was it not you who explained Virgil, after my father desired that I apply myself to the study of this poet?"

> *… parvumque ediscere jussit*
> *Ad tua verba pater, docili quo prisca Maronis*
> *Carmine molliret Scythicos mihi pagina mores.*
> [Sidon. Apol. *Carm.* 7][8]

Sidonius, who reports this fact, was the son-in-law of Avitus.

It is the same with other famous poets of antiquity. They wrote in the ordinary language of their country and their first supporters gave them an endorsement that is not subject to error. Since the establishment of the new peoples who currently inhabit Europe, no nation has preferred poems composed in its own language to the works of the ancient poets. Everyone who understands the poetry of the ancients, in the north, as in central Europe, in Catholic and Protestant countries, agrees that they are the more touching, and more beguiling than poetry composed in their native languages. Will someone suppose that the learned of all eras have formed a bizarre conspiracy to sacrifice the glory of their compatriots, whom for the most part they know only from their works, to the glory of ancient Greek and Roman authors, who were no longer in a position to know of this deception? The people of whom I speak [the learned], could not have made a good faith error, since they were giving an account of their own sentiments. The number of people who have expressed a contrary view is so small that it does not deserve to be called an exception. For, if there can be any question about the merit and excellence of a poem, it must be settled by the impression that it has made on everyone who has read it for twenty centuries.

The philosophical mind is only strengthened by reflection and by experience, and only its name would have been new to the ancients. It is excellent for writing books that teach how to avoid mistakes in writing. It is excellent for showing the mistakes an author has made. But in general, it is a poor guide to judging poetry. The best features of a work are beauties that are sensed better than they are known by ruler and compass. Quintilian did not calculate the

---

during his reign. Theodoric II (ca. 426–466), King of the Visigoths, 453–466. He killed his elder brother to take the throne. Marcus Maecillus Flavius Eparchius Avitus (ca. 390–456/7), Western Roman emperor who reigned little more than a year. He favoured returning Gaul to the Empire.

8 Sidonius Apollinaris, Carmen 7 (Panegyric of Avitus) 496–498: "Father ordered me as a child to learn your words by heart, so that through Virgil's teachable song the old page softened my Scythian habits."

blunders or debate in detail the real and relative mistakes of the writers on whom he passed judgement, judgements that have been adopted by all eras and nations. This great man estimated them by the impression that they made on the reader, and the public that has always judged by this means has always been of his opinion.

Finally, in matters that are in the domain of sentiment, such as the merit of a poem, the emotion of everyone who has read and is reading it, and their veneration for the work, is like a proof in geometry. For it is on the basis of this proof that people are enamoured of Virgil and several other poets. Thus, people will not change their opinion on this point until the workings of the human machine are changed. The poems of our authors would only appear mediocre when the organs of this machine are altered enough to make sugar bitter and wormwood sweet.[9] These people will respond to critics, without entering into a discussion of their remarks, that they have already recognized the flaws in the poems that they admire, and they will not change their sentiment because they come to see a few more flaws. They will respond that the compatriots of these great poets must have recognized more flaws in their works than we are currently capable of noticing. These works were written in ordinary language and the poet's compatriots would have known an infinite number of things of which all memory is lost, and which would have been a sound basis for several criticisms. However, they admired these illustrious writers as much as we admire them. Our critics should limit themselves to criticizing commentators who find beauty in these faults, of which there is always a great number in the best works. The ancients should not be more responsible for the puerilities of these commentators than a beautiful woman should be responsible for the extravagances that passion causes in admirers that she does not know.

The public has a right to leave to scholars the discussion of reasons that conflict with their experience. The public can hold that they have certain knowledge by means of sentiment. Their own sentiment, confirmed by the sentiments of other ages, is sufficient to persuade them that this reasoning must be mistaken. The public tranquilly keeps its opinion, while waiting for someone to take the trouble to find the systematic error. A physician, intelligent and very logical, writes a book to establish that, in our country and with our climate, vegetables and fish are foods as healthful as meat. He systematically states his principles. His reasons are well formulated, and they appear conclusive. How-

9 Du Bos undoubtedly borrowed this reference from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), 1.2.15: "For a child knows as certainly before it can speak the difference between the ideas of sweet and bitter (i.e., that sweet is not bitter), as it knows afterwards (when it comes to speak) that wormwood and sugarplums are not the same thing."

ever, they persuade no one. His contemporaries, without going to the trouble of discovering the source of his error, condemn him on the basis of their own experience. This clearly informs them that, in our country, meat is an easier and more healthful food than fish and vegetables. People know very well that it is easier to dazzle their minds than it is to impose on their sentiment.

Defending an established sentiment is to write a book whose subject barely interests one's contemporaries. If the author writes badly, no one talks of it. If it is well written, it is exposed as an opinion that is already known. Attacking an established sentiment initially distinguishes an author. Thus, today is not the only time when men of letters have tried, by contradicting received opinions, to acquire a reputation for having superior views, and for being born to set the tone for their era, rather than taking their cue from it. So, all established opinions about literature have already been attacked several times. Critics have attempted to downgrade every famous author. Some have even maintained that Virgil did not write the *Aeneid* and that Tacitus did not write the *History* and *Annals* that are attributed to him. Everything that can be done to slight the reputations of good ancient works has been written, or at least has been said. But they always remain in people's hands. They are not more likely to be downgraded than they are to be lost, as a part was lost during the barbarian invasions. Too many copies have been printed, and when Europe was reduced to the point that there were no more, the libraries in the European colonies in America and in the heart of Asia would conserve for posterity these precious monuments.

I return to the critics. When faults are noticed in a book generally recognized to be excellent, we should not think that we are the first whose eyes have been opened. Perhaps the ideas that occur to us have already occurred to others, who would initially have wanted to publish them immediately, and instantly disabuse the world of old errors. A little reflection made them defer a precipitate attack on a widespread opinion that appeared to them to be nothing but prejudice. A little meditation made them understand that they believed themselves more clear-sighted than others only because they were not informed enough. They grasped that everyone had grounds for thinking, as they had for several centuries, that if the reputation of the ancients could be weakened, a long time would already have elapsed since the smoke of time's torch had, so to speak, obscured it. In short, their zeal was ill considered.

A young man who joins a large establishment begins by blaming the administration of his predecessors. He could not understand how sensible people had praised his predecessor. The young man undertakes to prevent the bad and promote the good, better than him. The ill success of the young man's tentative efforts to reform the abuses, and establish order in his office, the

insights that experience gives him, and that only it can give him, soon make him aware that his predecessor knew his job. Everyone had reason to praise him. Our first meditations are the same: we sometimes revolt against the established opinions in the Republic of Letters. But some more sensible reflections on the manner in which these opinions are established, some more extensive and distinct conceptions of what people are capable of making, and our experience finally return us to these opinions. A twenty-year-old French painter, just arrived in Rome to study, does not at first see in Raphael's works a merit that matches their reputation. He is sometimes flighty enough to announce his opinion; but a year later, when a little reflection has returned him to the general opinion, he is angry at himself for having spoken as he did. Because one is not enlightened enough, one sometimes dismisses the common opinion in these matters, whose value can, perhaps, be known by all people. *Nihil est peius iis, qui paulum aliquid ultra primas litteras progressi falsam sibi scientiae persuasionem induerunt* [Quint. bk. 1, ch. 2].[10]

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.1.8: "Nothing can be worse than those who, having got just beyond the alphabet, delude themselves that they have acquired some knowledge."

CHAPTER 35

Of the Idea Men Should Have of the Writings of the Ancients When They Do Not Understand the Originals.

Those who do not understand the languages in which ancient poets, orators, and even historians wrote are incapable of judging their excellence for themselves. If they want to have a fair idea of the worth of these works, they must take the word of people who know and understand those languages. Men would not be able to judge an object when they cannot judge it by the testimony of the sense intended for knowing it. We could not judge the flavour of a liquor before having tasted it, nor the beauty of the sound of a violin until after having heard it. But the poem whose language we do not understand could not be known by us by the testimony of the sense intended for judging it. We could not discern its merit by the path of sentiment, which is the sixth sense I have spoken about. It is up to that sense to know if the object presented to us is a touching object capable of connecting with us, just as it is up to the ear to judge if sounds are delightful, and the palate if flavours are enjoyable.

No amount of critical discourse will reveal the value of Horace's *Odes* to someone ignorant of Latin, any more than a report of the qualities of a liquor we have never tasted could reveal its flavour to us. Nothing else could provide the report from the sense meant for judging the thing. The ideas we form in our own minds, based on the discourse and reasoning of others, resemble the ideas of a man born blind trying to form ideas of colours.[1] They are the ideas that a man who has never been sick could have of fever or colic.

Someone who has not heard a melody is not in a position to dispute its excellence with those who have heard it. Someone who has never had a fever

1 Du Bos refers to what is called 'Molyneux's problem,' since it was first put forward by William Molyneux (1656–1698), Irish writer and philosopher. A great friend of John Locke, Locke mentions the problem in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 2.9.8: "if a man born blind can feel the difference between shapes such as spheres and cubes, could he, if given the ability to see (but now without recourse to touch), distinguish those objects by sight (alone), in reference to the tactile schemata he already possessed?" Du Bos mentions colour, not sphericity, but Molyneux's question can be, and was frequently, transferred to other types of sensations.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_090

cannot debate the impression made by that illness with those who have had a fever. Similarly, someone who does not know the language in which a poet has written is not in a position to argue against those who understand this poet, regarding its merit and the impression it makes. Is disputing a poet's merit and his superiority to other poets not just disputing the different impressions their poems make on their readers and the emotion they cause? Is disputing the truth of a natural fact, which men always believe on the basis of consistent eyewitness testimony, not preferable to all those who want to challenge the possibility by metaphysical reasoning?

Those who do not understand the language used by the poet cannot form by themselves a judgement of his merit and the class to which he belongs. Is it not more reasonable that they adopt the sentiment of those who understood and still understand it than to espouse the sentiment of two or three critics who claim that the poem does not make the same impression on them as everyone else who reads the poem says it does? I only take into consideration here the sentiment of the critics, because analyses and discussions about a matter that should not be decided by rational debate are worthless. But these critics who claim that ancient poems do not make the impression on them that they make on the rest of men are one in a hundred thousand. Would we listen to a sophist who wants to prove that those who take pleasure in drinking wine have corrupt taste, buttressing his case with the example of five or six people who drank wine with horror? Those who are capable of understanding the ancients and find them distasteful are also few in number, compared to those with a fondness for them, just as those who have a natural aversion to wine are few in comparison.

We should not be dazzled by the fake talk of *Denigrators* of the ancients,[2] who want to link their distaste with scholars who have written about the errors of the most beautiful ancient books. These men, skilled in the art of falsifying truth without lying, want to make us believe that those scholars are in their camp. In one sense they have reason to do so. In *questions of fact*, such as knowing whether the reading of a certain poem is very engaging or not, everyone judges as juries are accustomed to judging; that is to say, they always find in favour of a hundred witnesses who are in a position to have witnessed the fact, and with contempt for all the reasons of a small number of people who say they have never seen it, who moreover maintain that it is impossible. The *Denigrators* of the ancients have the right to claim for their sect only those critics who

2 In the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, the *Contempteurs* of the ancients included critics such as Perrault and Fontenelle. See the Introduction for more details on this historic debate.

held that the ancients amount to nothing but old errors and crude prejudices, the reputation for which faults makes them worthless. A list of the critics would take two lines, and volumes would scarcely suffice to create a list of critics with the opposite taste. In truth, to defy such general consensus, to give denial to so many past centuries and to our own, one must believe that the world is merely in its infancy, and that we are the first generation of rational men that the earth has ever seen.

But, someone will say, could translations made by scholarly and skillful writers ever put, for example, those Latinless readers into a position to judge for themselves, to judge Virgil's *Aeneid* by the path of sentiment?

I agree that the French version of Virgil's *Aeneid* falls, so to speak, under the sense that judges the original poem; but the French *Aeneid* is no longer the same poem as the Latin *Aeneid*. Much of the merit of a Greek or Latin poem consists in the rhythm and harmony of the verses; and the very noticeable beauties in the original cannot be, so to speak, transplanted into a French translation. Virgil himself could not transplant them, especially because our language is not as susceptible to these beauties as Latin is, as I explained in Book One of this work. In the second place, poetic style, about which we spoke at length in the Book One and that nearly entirely determines the success of a poem, is so disfigured in even the best translation that it is nearly no longer recognizable.

It is always difficult to translate an author with purity and fidelity, even one who only recounts facts in a very simple style. This is especially so when a writer wrote in a language with stronger and more precise expression than the language in which one undertakes the translation. Accordingly, it is very difficult to translate all the writers who wrote in Greek and Latin into French. So let us judge whether it is possible to translate the figurative style of those poets who wrote in Greek or Latin without sapping the force of their style and robbing it of its greatest charms.

Either the translator takes the liberty to change expressions, substituting those used in his own language for others used by the author, or he translates these expressions word for word, preserving in his version the same images presented in the original. If the translator changes the expressions, it is no longer the original author, but rather the translator who is speaking to us. This is a huge waste, even if, which does not happen often, the translator has as much spirit and genius as the author he translates.

We always express our own ideas better than the ideas of others. Furthermore, it is very rare that expressions considered similar in two languages can have precisely the same meaning. They may fail to have the same nobility, even if they have the same meaning. For example, to talk about something beyond

human ability, Latin-speakers would say, "*arracher la massue à Hercule*,"[3] and we say in French, "*prendre la lune avec les dents*."[4] Is the simple, noble Latin expression rendered well by the French?

There is at least as much dross in the poem whose translator wants to translate its expressions word for word. First, the translator cannot render words with precision without having to add some little descriptions either to restrict or extend the signification of a word he translates. Words we must regard as synonyms or relatives in Latin and French do not always have the same property, nor the same breadth of signification; and it is often this property that gives precision and value to the expression, which helps the poet. We usually translate the word '*Herus*' by '*Maître*,' even though the French word does not have the precise sense of the Latin, which properly signifies the master with respect to his slave. Sometimes the translator needs to use an entire paraphrase to render the sense of a single word, making the expression drag on and sucking the life out of the sentence compared to the original. It is the same for one of Virgil's sentences as it is for one of Raphael's figures. If you alter just a bit of Raphael's contour, you will eliminate the energy of his expression and the nobility of the head. Similarly, alter Virgil's expression just a bit, and the sentence no longer says the same thing so well. We no longer can find the original expression in the copy. Although the word '*Empereur*' is derived from '*Imperator*,' by the difference in their scope of signification do we not often have to use a paraphrase to indicate precisely the sense in which we are using the word '*Empereur*' in translating '*Imperator*'?[5] Excellent translators sometimes choose to use the Latin word '*Imperator*' in the French sentence.

When considered solely as a simple sound taken independently of the idea to which it is attached, could a word which may have precisely the same signification in two languages be found more noble in one language than in another, just as one finds a base word in a sentence of a translation where the author had put a beautiful word in the original? Is the word '*Renaud*' as beautiful in French as '*Rinaldo*' in Italian? Does '*Titus*' not sound better than '*Tite*?'

---

3 The Latin of this phrase is "*Herculi clavam subripere*." The phrase comes from Suetonius echoing Asconius Pedianus' "Against the Detractors of Virgil." Suetonius was charged for stealing a good amount of his material from Virgil, to which Virgil responded, "*Verum intellecturos facilius esse Herculi clavam quam Homero versum subripere*." "They would understand that it is easier to steal the club from Hercules, than a line from Homer." (Suetonius, *Life of Virgil* 46.)

4 Latin: "To steal the club of Hercules." French: "To take the moon in one's teeth."

5 The Latin 'Imperator' originally meant 'commander-in-chief' or 'general,' and carries this military connotation in subsequent use, even though it is transferred beyond the military sphere to mean 'commander, leader, chief, director, ruler, master.' See Lewis and Short '*imperator*.' The French '*Empereur*' does not carry the military connotation.

On account of the idea attached to a word, words translated from one language to another can become less noble and suffer, so to speak, from depreciation. Does '*Hospes*' not lose part of the dignity it has in Latin, where it signifies a man tied to another through most intimate friendship, a man tied to another so much that he can use his friend's house as his own, when we render it into French with the word '*Hôte*,' which usually means those who provide others with lodging, or who lodge others in their homes for money. It is with words as it is with men. To express veneration, it is not enough to sometimes display them in honourable capacities or significations; they must never be represented in low capacities or base significations.

Second, even supposing that the translator succeeded in rendering a Latin expression in all its force, it happens very often that this expression fails to make the same impression on us that it made on the Romans, for whom the poem was written. We have only imperfect knowledge of the things for which the expression was coined. Even if we were to have complete knowledge, our tastes are not those of the Romans, and the image that puts the same things before our eyes does not affect us as it did the Romans, as I will explain below.

Expressions coined from ancient weapons and military machinery cannot make the same impression on us as it did on them. Can expressions drawn from gladiatorial combat gear strike a Frenchman unfamiliar with it, or who at least has never seen combats in the Amphitheatre, to the extent they affected a Roman who watched them several times a month? Do we believe that expressions borrowed from the orchestra, the choruses, and the dances of the opera, would affect those who had never seen this spectacle, to the same extent as it affects those who attend opera every week? Does the expression, "*Manger son pain à l'ombre de son figuier*,"[6] make the same impression on a Syrian endlessly besieged by bright sun, and who is left to find pleasure in relaxing under a tree's broad leaves, the best shelter given by all the trees in his country's plains? Can Septentrional people[7] be as sensitive to expressions depicting the sweetness and freshness of shade as people who live in warm countries, for whom all these images were invented? Virgil and other ancient poets would have used expressions from opposite styles if they had written for Hyperboreal nations. Instead of drawing most of their metaphors from a stream from which fresh water refreshes the traveller, or from a thicket of woods giving delicious shade

6 "He eats his bread under the shadow of his own fig tree."

7 This was a commonly used expression to mean 'people of the north'. It usually occupied the top banner on maps, as opposed to the banners occidental (western), oriental (eastern), and meridional (southern). The comes from *septem triones*, the seven bears, which is a reference to the constellation Ursa Major, which contains the Big Dipper.

to the edges of a fountain, they would have borrowed them from a warm oven or from the effects of wine and alcoholic spirits. They must be amenable to depicting the lively anticipation that a freezing cold man would feel as he approaches the fire, or the slower but sweeter pleasure he derives from covering himself with a fur cloak. We are more sensitive to the depiction of everyday pleasures than to the depiction of pleasures we have never, or only rarely, tasted, and that we scarce miss. Indifferent, and without a taste for this undesirable pleasure, we cannot be as vividly affected by this depiction as one made by Virgil. What attraction can there be for northerners who have yet to taste a drop of pure water? They only imagine the pleasure described by the poet in these lines from Virgil's *Eclogue* 5, which provides such an appealing image of the pleasure that a man feels when, weighed down by fatigue, he settles down to sleep on green grass, or the sweet satisfaction of a traveler, dying of thirst, who quenches his thirst with the cool waters of a living fountain?

> *Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per aestum*
> *Dulcis aquae saliente sitim restinguere rivo*.[8]

That is the purpose of most images, which ancient poets wisely used to engage their compatriots and contemporaries.

A noble image in one country can be base in another. Such is the image that a Greek poet makes of an ass, an animal which in his country was well-made and beneficial, whereas in ours it is nasty. We only ever see this animal shabbily covered and abandoned to help people in their most vile labour, whereas in Greece this animal is saddled and mounted by the country's leaders, often decked out in gold and embroidery. For example, this is what a missionary wrote about the opinion people have of asses in certain East Indian countries, "As in Europe, one finds asses here […] Madame, you would not imagine that there is an entire caste here that claims to descend in a straight line from an ass, and they do so with honour. You will tell me that this caste must be very low. Not at all: it is that of the King" [*Lettres Edif*. Vol. 12, p. 96].[9] Should we judge a poet from

8 Virgil, *Eclogue* 5.45–46: "Your lay, heavenly bard, is to me even as sleep on the grass to the weary, as in summer heat the slaking of thirst in a dancing rill of sweet water."

9 *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, vol. 12 (Paris: 1717), 96: "*On trouve ici des asnes comme en Europe*. […] *Vous ne vous imagineriez pas, Madame, que nous avons ici une Caste entiere qui prétend descendre en droite ligne d'un asne, et qui s'en fait honneur. Vous me direz que cette caste doit être plus basses. Point du tout, c'est celle même du Roy*." Quotation corrected. This quotation comes from *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, a collection of thirty-four volumes of letters collected from Jesuit missionaries travelling through China, India, the Middle East and the

that country based on our own ideas generated by reading it in French translation? If we had never seen horses other than those of the peasants from the Isle de France, would we be affected as much as we are by stories in which a great charger[10] is the main character? But, someone will say, it is necessary to give the poet, whose translation we put on trial, all the expressions and prosopopæias[11] found in his country's customs and habits. In the first place, that is what one does not do. I do not think this is prevarication. I blame only critics who lack adequate knowledge of different people's customs and habits to judge which expressions those customs and habits authorize or not, in a certain poet. In the second place, these expressions are not only excusable, they are also beautiful in the original.

Finally let us ask those who can write in both Latin and French. They respond that the energy of a sentence and the effect of an expression are bound up in the words of the language, so to speak, in which they were invented and written. As a result, they do not know how to translate or give an original turn to their own thoughts when they turn French into Latin, and even less when they turn Latin into French. Eloquent traits and images always lose something when they are transplanted from the language in which they were born.

We have seen the best translations of Virgil and Homer that can be made. All who understand Latin never tire of saying that these versions fail to give us an idea the value of the originals. Their opinion is further confirmed by the general experience of those who allow themselves to be guided in their choice of reading by the attractions of books. Those who know Latin satisfy their desire by reading Horace and Virgil. But those who can only read these poets in translation find so little pleasure that they need to put in an effort to finish reading the *Aeneid*. They cannot cease to be astonished that we read the originals with so much pleasure. On the other hand, those who are surprised that works that charm them displease those who read them in translation are as wrong as the former. Both need to reflect that those reading Horace's *Odes* in French are not reading the same poems as those reading the book in Latin. So true is my

---

Americas. These volumes were extremely popular and provided western Europeans with important albeit anecdotal information about the rest of the world.

10 Du Bos refers to a '*coursier*,' which according to *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Français 1694* (vol. 1), is a "*grand cheval de taille noble, propre pour les batailles and les tournois*" ("a great horse of noble height, appropriate for battles and tournaments").

11 A prosopopaeia is a rhetorical device whereby the author communicates using another person's voice. Sometimes an inanimate object can also be used in place of the author's voice. The etymology of the word is useful: '*prosopon*' is the Greek word for person, and '*poiein*' is the verb for making and doing.

reflection that we could not learn a language without at the same time learning various things about the characters' customs and habits. This casts light on an author's expressions and poetic style, which are unavailable to those who are not enlightened.

Why do the French have so little taste for translations of Ariosto and Tasso, even though the reading of *Orlando Furioso*[12] and *Jerusalem Delivered*[13] rightly charms every Frenchman who knows Italian and can easily understand the originals? Why can the same person who has read the *Works* of Racine six times not finish reading a translation of the *Aeneid*, although those who know Latin, having read Virgil's poems ten times, have read Racine's tragedies only three times? It is because the essence of all translation is to give a miserable rendition of a poem's great beauties, just as it faithfully renders its defects of plot and character. If I may say so, in poetry, the value of things is almost always *identical* to the merit of the expression.

Those who read to educate themselves do not lose the historian's pleasing style when they read a good translation. In contrast to the poet, the principal merit of an historian is not a matter of moving us. The historian's style is not the first thing that engages us in his work. We are drawn to the important events in themselves, and the unique truth they give to the narrative. History's principal merit is to enrich our memory and form our judgement. But poetry's principal merit consists in moving us. Its emotional attraction makes us read a poem. A poem's greatest merit escapes us when we do not understand the words the poet chose, and we see them in the order in which they have been arranged to please our ears and form images capable of moving our hearts.

Indeed, when we change the words of the two verses of Racine that we have already cited:

---

12 *Orlando Furioso*, which means "Mad Roland," is an epic poem written by Ludovico Ariosto. This highly influential poem is a story of jilted love. Orlando is a knight and peer of Charlemagne's court, in love with Princess Angelica. When Angelica leaves Orlando for another man, Orlando goes mad with rage and destroys large swathes of Europe and Africa. After a trip to the moon on a flaming chariot, Orlando is able to resume his sanity and finds he no longer loves Angelica. The story was widely depicted in other forms of art, including classical musical composition and painting.

13 *La Gerusalemme liberata* [Jerusalem Delivered] is an epic poem by Torquato Tasso. This is his best-known and best-received piece of work. The action takes place during the First Crusade, and the main plot involves the battles between Christians and Muslims. Also hugely popular, this poem was widely depicted by great artists and composers, and was also heavily used as political propaganda.

Enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné
Contre un joug qui lui plait vainement mutiné:[14]

and say, preserving the general sense: "*Mettre des fers à un prisonnier de guerre qui en est surpris; et qui fait en vain le mutin contre un joug agréable*,"[15] we remove the harmony and poetic style from these verses. The same general sense does not generate the same image. In other words, it defaces the picture that Racine's verses offer by disrupting its terms and by substituting the definition of a word in place of the word. Those needing further convincing about how replacing one word, which does not belong to the language in which it was composed, with another weakens the vitality of a sentence should read Aristotle's *Poetics* 38.[16]

Those who translate Greek and Roman poets into French need to deviate even more in their expressions from their original than I have done for the verses of *Phaedra*. The most capable and hard-working are disgusted by unproductive efforts at rendering their translations as energetic as the original, where they sense a force and precision they cannot infuse into their copy. They let themselves be led away from the genius of our language, and submit themselves to the fate of translations, after having wrestled with them for some time.

Since we can no longer recover either the words chosen by the author in a translation, or the arrangement in which they were placed to please our ears and move our hearts, one can generally say that to judge a poem by this version is like judging a great masterpiece on the basis of an engraving where, emptied of its colours, the character of the design is corrupted. In a translation, a poem loses harmony and metre, which I compare to the colours of a painting. It loses the artistry of its style, which I compare to design and expression. A translation is an engraving where nothing of the original painting remains, except the configuration and attitude of the figures: and even this is altered.

Judging a poem by a translation, and on the basis of the critics, is like judging a thing that is perceivable by a sense, but is unknown to that sense. But

14 See Book One, Chapter Thirty-three. Racine, *Phèdre*, 2.1452–1453:
To lead a captive at his chains surprised,
Rebelling vainly against a pleasing yoke.

15 "To put chains on a prisoner of war, which is a surprise to him, and who fights in vain against a pleasing yoke."

16 Du Bos mistakenly cites *Poetics* 23. Aristotle does not speak of using words taken from another language, but rather about the use of uncommon words. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a: "That which employs unfamiliar words is dignified and outside the common usage. By 'unfamiliar' I mean a rare word, a metaphor, a lengthening, and anything beyond ordinary use. But if a poet writes entirely in such words, the result will be either a riddle or jargon."

to form an idea of a poem on the basis of the unanimous opinion of people capable of understanding it in the original, based on the impression it makes on them, is the best way to judge it when we do not understand the language. Nothing is more reasonable than to suppose that the object would make the same impression on us as it does on them, if we were equally susceptible to the same impression. Should we listen to a man, wanting to prove through careful reasoning, that the painting, *The Wedding at Cana*, by Paolo Veronese,[17] which he has not seen, cannot be as successful as people who have seen it say it is, because it is impossible that a painting could be a success when there are innumerable faults of artistic composition in Veronese's painting? One should say to the critic, "Go see the painting," and he will find himself in agreement with everyone who has seen it and know that, despite its faults, he finds it charming. In fact, the uniform report of other people's sense experience is, next to the report of our own, the most certain path we have for judging the value of things that fall under sentiment. Men are in a good position to know, and human faith is never shaken, when based on the uniform report of other people's senses. Without inexcusable temerity, one cannot speak with confidence when it is a question of a poem that one does not understand. The opinion that men have that it is excellent, "is nothing other than an acquired prejudice founded on ovations, which, to return to our first complaints, are for the most part only echoes of one another" [*Discours sur Homère*, p. 122],[18] and it is even more reckless to compose a speculative history of this prejudice.

17 Paolo Veronese's *The Wedding at Cana* (1563) depicts in Mannerist style the biblical account of the wedding banquet during which Jesus converts water into wine (John 2:1–1). The canvas is immense at nearly 70 m².

18 Antoine Houdar de La Motte, *L'Iliade, poème avec un Discours sur Homère* [The Iliad, poem, with a discussion on Homer] (Paris: 1714). Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672–1731), French author. Despite being Greekless, he generated a controversy in 1714 by translating into French verse Homer's *Iliad* on the basis of an earlier translation. De la Motte was a fierce defender of the moderns in the great quarrel.

CHAPTER 36

Of the Errors Into Which Those Who Judge a Poem on the Basis of a Translation or the Remarks of Critics Fall.

What would we think of an Englishman, supposing that he, without knowing a word of French, was flighty enough to judge *El Cid* on the basis of Rutter's translation? [Published in 1637.][1] What would we think if he concluded by pronouncing that he must attribute the affection of the French for the original to childish prejudices? We know the faults of *El Cid* even better than you, we would say to him, but you cannot feel as well as us the beauties that make us love it, despite the faults. Finally, we would say to this reckless judge everything that a conviction founded on sentiment makes us say, when we could not easily set forth the reasons and terms proper to systematically refute offensively wrong suggestions. He will be lucky to escape blows from even the most moderate person. Now, everyone who has learned Greek and English knows very well that a Greek poet, translated into French, loses a lot more of its value than a French poet translated into English.

All judgements and all parallels about poems that are known only from translations and the writings of critics infallibly lead to false conclusions. Suppose, for example, that *The Maid of Orleans* and *El Cid* were translated into Polish and that a Kraków scholar, after having read these translations, judged these poems by the path of rational examination and debate. Suppose that, after having made a systematic study of the structure, customs, characters, and the *vraisemblance* of events, both in the natural and supernatural world, he evaluates these poems. Certainly he will decide in favour of *The Maid of Orleans*. His investigation will discover a poem more in accordance with the rules, and less defective of its genre, than *El Cid* is in its. Moreover, suppose that this Polish reasoner finally persuades his compatriots that it possible to judge a poem in a language one does not understand, after having read a translation and the commentary. In this case, they will not fail to pronounce that Chapelain is a better

1 Joseph Rutter, *The Cid. A Tragi comedy out of French made English and acted before their Majesties at Court, and on the Cock pit stage in Drury Lane, by the servants to both their Majesties* (London: 1637). Joseph Rutter (fl. 1630s), English playwright and translator. He was a friend of Ben Jonson.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_091

poet than the great Corneille. They will treat us as slaves of prejudice because we do not reach their decision. What should we think of a procedure that gives rise to such judgements?

CHAPTER 37

On the Defects We Believe We See in Ancient Poems.

As for the faults we believe we see in ancient poems, and which we can already count on our fingers, it can be true that we often deceive ourselves in more than one way. Sometimes we blame a poet for mistakes, such errors he has made in his work by including several things in it that the time he lives in, and the consideration that he owes to his contemporaries, required him to include. For example, when Homer composed the *Iliad*, he did not write a story invented to please that allowed him to freely create the heroes' characters, or give to events the outcome he pleased, or embellish certain facts by every noble circumstance he could imagine. Homer undertook to write in verse about one part of the events of a war that the Greeks, his compatriots, waged for some time against the Trojans, and of which memory was still fresh. According to the most common opinion, Homer lived about five hundred years after the Trojan War and. According to Newton's chronology [*Chronology*, pp. 95, and 162],[1] Homer lived even closer to the time of that war and he knew many people who saw Achilles and other famous heroes in Agamemnon's camp. I agree that Homer, as a poet, had to treat the events differently than a simple historian would have. He had to add in marvellous events that were compatible with *vraisemblance*, following the religion of his day. He had to embellish these events by fictions and to do, in a word, what Aristotle praised him for having done [*Poetics* ch. 24]. But Homer, as a citizen, historian, and author of poetry destined primarily to serve the annals of the Greeks, was often required to make his narrative conform to public opinion.

We see from the example of our ancestors, and by what is practiced today in Northern Europe, and in one part of America, that poems are the first historical monuments presented by nations to preserve the memory of past events, and to inspire men with virtues essential to developing societies. People who were still uncouth wrote types of hymns [*Tuscul.* 1.4][2] celebrating the praises of

1 Isaac Newton wrote *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (London: 1728), which was published posthumously.

2 The word for 'hymns' is '*cantiques*,' which can also mean 'poems.' In antiquity, poems such as Homer's *Iliad* were usually sung. See Martin L. West, "The singing of Homer and the modes of early Greek music," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981), 113–129; Andrew M. Devine and Laurence D. Stephens, *The Prosody of Greek Speech* (New York: 1994).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_092

compatriots worthy of being imitated, and they sang these on many occasions. Cicero taught us that, after Numa, the Romans took up this practice again.[3] At dinner, they sang hymns written to praise illustrious men.

Greeks had origins similar to those of other peoples, and they were a nascent society before becoming a cultured nation. Their first historians were poets. Strabo [*Georg*. Bk. 1][4] and other ancient writers teach us as much as Cadmus,[5] Pherecides [*Versuum nexu repudato, conscribere ausus passivis verbis Pheredices*. *Apul. Florid. 1.4*],[6] and Hecataeus,[7] the first prose writers, omitting from their style only the metre of verse. For many centuries after their origin, the Greeks had a sense of history. Most who subsequently wrote in prose preserved poetic style, and for a long time they remained free to throw the supernatural into the events. *Graecis historiis, plerumque poeticae similis, inest licentia* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 2. Ch. 4].[8] Homer was not the first writer of the hymns of which I spoke. He only came after them.

---

3 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.2.3: [*V*]*estigia autem Pythagoreorum quamquam multa colligi possunt, paucis tamen utemur, quoniam non id agitur hoc tempore: nam cum carminibus soliti illi esse dicantur et praecepta quaedam occultius tradere et mentes suas a cogitationum intentione cantu fidibusque ad tranquillitatem traducere, gravissimus auctor in Originalibus dixit Cato morem apud maiores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes: ex quo perspicuum est et cantus tum fuisse descriptos vocum sonis et carmina*. "But though many traces of the Pythagoreans can be brought together, I shall nevertheless make sparing use of them, as this is not my present object. For, as it was their habit, according to what we are told, to convey certain instruction more guardedly in the form of verse, and to withdraw their thoughts from intense meditation by the use of song and the music of the harp to calm their minds, Cato, a writer of great authority, has stated in his *Origines* that at banquets it was the custom of our ancestors for the guests at table to sing one after the other to the accompaniment of the flute in praise of the merits of illustrious men." The reference is to King Numa, a follower of Pythagoras. Most Roman sources deny that Numa was a follower of Pythagoras for reasons of chronology. Cicero mentions this just before the passage quoted. Livy and Plutarch give the same reasoning. The dating of Numa, albeit mythical, places him born at the founding of Rome, 753 BC, 180 years before Pythagoras' birth.

4 Strabo, *Geographica* [Geography] 1. Strabo (64 BC–AD 24), geographer and historian.

5 Cadmus is a well-known figure from ancient Greek mythology. Credited with founding the city of Thebes, Cadmus was also (falsely) said to have given the Greeks their alphabet.

6 The quotation comes from *Florida*, a collection of extracts from Apuleius' lectures: "*Quin etiam Pherecydes Syro ex insula oriundus, qui primus versuum nexu repudiato conscribere ausus est passis verbis* …" "Furthermore, Pherecydes, born on the isle of Syros, who was the first to reject the interconnected lines of verse and dared to write in ordinary speech …" Pherecydes of Syros (fl. 6th century BC), author of a lost cosmogony that is part way between mythology and early philosophical thought.

7 Hacataeus of Miletus (ca. 550–ca. 476 BC), Greek historian and geographer.

8 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.4.19: "Greek historical narratives often display an almost poetic licence."

Post hos insignis Homerus
Tirtaeusque mares animos in Martia bella
Versibus exacuit.
[Horat. *Art of poet.*][9]

But it was still the practice of his time to regard poems as historical records. Homer would have been reprimanded had he changed certain characters, or altered well-known events, and above all if, on his listing of armies, he omitted those who were actually present. It is easy to imagine the complaints their descendants would level against the poet.

When he wrote his annals, Tacitus recounts that the Germans sang about the exploits of Arminius,[10] who had died eighty years earlier. Were authors of these Cheruscan hymns[11] free to go against known truths and suppose, for example, to give greater honour to the heroes, that Arminius never took an oath of allegiance to the Roman Eagles he battled? When these poets spoke of his meeting on the banks of the Weser with his brother Flavius, who served in the Roman army, were they able to make them conclude their conference with seriousness and decency, when everyone knew that the German General and the Roman officer threw torrents of abuse at one another in the presence of the armies of the two nations, and would have exchanged blows were they not separated by the river?

Let us use an example that will resonate better with us. Today the job of the historian and the job of the poet are very distinct professions. We read annalists when we want instruction about the facts of the matter, whereas we seek pleasure only when we read our poets. Do we believe that Chapelain, who wrote his poem on the *Maid*, when already more time had passed between the event and when he wrote, than between the siege of Troy by the Greeks and when Homer composed the *Iliad*? Do we, I ask, believe that Chapelain was the master at treating and embellishing the characters of his principal

9 Horace, *Art of poetry* 401–403: "After these Homer won his renown, and Tyrtaeus with his verses fired manly hearts for battles of Mars."

10 Arminius (17 BC–AD 21), head of the Germanic Cherusci, a tribe inhabiting northwestern Germany. When Tacitus wrote about them in *Germania* 1, the Cherusci had already fallen under Roman control. Arminius, also known as 'Hermann der Cherusker,' wanted to get out from the grip of the Romans and declare independence. He was held back by warring German tribes, and battles broke out between them and the Roman soldiers who had come to protect the area. Arminius was finally defeated in AD 16, and was later killed by family members as he repeatedly vied to become king.

11 Cheruscan, or German, hymns were sung by travelling poets and performers. They told stories of famous people, mixed with mythological elements.

actors to his liking? Could he make Agnes Sorel a violent and sanguine girl, or a person lacking spirit, who could counsel Charles VII to live with her in obscurity? Was he able to give this Prince the well-known character of the Count of Dunois? Could he change the outcomes of the battles and sieges at his pleasure? Was he able to hush up some of the well-known circumstances of the action that dishonoured Charles VII? Tradition would have risen against him. Moreover, as I explained in Book One of this work, nothing destroys *vraisemblance*, which is the soul of fiction, more than seeing it derailed by commonly known facts.

If Homer's heroes did not battle among themselves in duels as often as they quarrelled, it is because they did not have the feelings about honour as the Goths, or people like them. The Greeks and Romans who lived before the corruption of their nations had less fear of dying than the English. But they thought that a baseless slight dishonoured only the person who said it. If the slight contained a reasonable reproach, they thought that the person who received it had no recourse to repair his honour other than correcting himself. Those civilized people had not yet been informed that the chance outcome of a duel, or a sword fight, which they considered to be a slave's art, must settle a dispute or was a good means to defend themselves against a reproach, which more often than not does not concern a person's bravery. Winning proves only that one is a better gladiator than one's adversary, but not that he is free of the vice for which he was blamed. Was it fear that prevented Caesar and Cato from meeting in an open field, after which Caesar exposed in front of the entire Senate the love-letter of Cato's sister? The way that both of them ended up dead shows that they had no fear of it whatsoever.

I cannot recall having read anything in Greek or Roman history that resembles Gothic duels, aside from an incident that occurred during the funereal games, which Scipio the African gave under the walls of the new Carthage in honour of his father and uncle. Both lost their lives in the Spanish Wars. Livy recounts that the champions were not ordinary gladiators hired from the merchant, but barbarians, whom Scipio was perhaps quite happy to get rid of, and who fought one another for different reasons. Some of them, according to the historian, wanted to put an end to their disputes and their sword-fighting. But the Greeks and Romans, so passionate for glory, could never imagine that it might be shameful for citizens to wait for vengeance from public authority. It was reserved for people—those that poverty would drive from the northern snows one day—to believe that their best champion should necessarily be the most honest man, and that a society, in which honour would compel citizens to avenge real or imagined insults sword-in-hand, deserved to be called a state. If Quinault does not make Phaëto draw his sword during his conversation with

Epaphus, it is because he introduced two Egyptians, and not two Burgundians or two Vandals, into his scene [*Opera de Phaëton*, Act 3].[12]

The prejudice that the majority of people have for their era and their homeland is a fertile source of false claims as well as false judgements. They take what they do as a rule and as what should be practiced always and everywhere. Only a few practices, and only a few virtues and vices, having been praised or blamed in all times and in all places. Poets have good cause to practice what Quintilian recommended to orators, namely, to take their cue from those for whom they write, and to conform to them. *Plurimum refert qui sint audientium mores, quae publice recepta persuasio* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 3. Ch. 9].[13] Thus we should transform ourselves into those for whom the poem was written, if we want to fairly judge its images, its figures, and its sentiments. The Parthian who rides away downcast after having not succeeded in his first charge, and in order to take his time and not be fruitlessly exposed to the enemy's darts, should not be considered a coward, because this way of fighting was authorized by the military discipline of the Parthians, founded on their own ideas of courage and real valour. The ancient Germans, renowned for their bravery, also believed that it was prudence, not cowardice, that made them retreat, in order to return with more vigour. *Cedere loco, dum rursus instes magis, consilii quam formidinis arbitrantur* [Tacitus. *De mor. Germ.*].[14]

We have seen Homer criticized for having given a lovely description of the gardens of King Alcinous, similar, they might say, to that of a good winery somewhere in or around Paris. But supposing that was true, it is the job of an architect to create a marvellous garden. And it is the job of a prince to plant it, at great expense. It is the job of a poet, however, to give a decent description of what people in his day are capable of doing. In his description of the gardens of Alcinous, Homer is as great an artist as if he had given a description of the gardens of Versailles.

After having reproached ancient poets for filling their poems with common and ignoble subjects, some think themselves highly moderate for avoiding the mistake that they think they have not committed, the era in which they live, and pity the ancients for having lived in crude times.

---

12 Phaëton (1683) is an operatic tragedy written by Jean-Baptiste Lully, whose libretto was written by Philippe Quinault. The story is derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It was a highly praised work in its day.

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 3.7.23: "For much depends on the character of the audience and the generally prevailing opinion."

14 Tacitus, *Germania* 6: "to retire, provided you press on again, they treat as a question of tactics, not of cowardice."

The manner in which we live with our horses, if it is permitted to speak this way, turns us against the ways [ancient] poets made humans speak to horses in their poems. We cannot bear that their masters speak to them just like a hunter speaks to his hound. But those conversations, such as those in the *Iliad*, were written to be read by people for whom a horse was, in some way or other, a companion to its master. These conversations were intended to please those who thought that animals had a modicum of understanding that we do not ascribe to them, and for whom their horses were considered their equals. Whether the view that animals have some sort of nearly human reason is false or not, this is not the business of the poet. It is not left to the poet to purge physical falsehoods from his era. His job is to make art that is faithful to the customs and practices of his country, to make his imitation as *vraisemblable* as possible. For the same work for which he was blamed above, Homer would have pleased many people in Asia and Africa, who continue to treat their horses in the same way, just as they do with several other customs.

This is what Busbecq,[15] the Ambassador to Emperor Ferdinand I, said to the Great Sultan Suleiman I about the practice of treating horses in Bithnya, a neighbouring country of Asiatic Greek colonies that borders on Phrygia, where the great Hector was born.[16] Some people would be struck dumb by the way he spoke to his horses. "I saw in Bithnya that everyone, including peasants, treated their horses humanely, caressing them as they would their own children when they wanted them to do something, and they allowed them the freedom to come and go in their homes. They allowed them to sit with them at their dinner tables. The grooms tended to the horses with the same kindness. They manage them by flattering and nearly persuading them, and only in extreme cases would they strike them. The horses themselves struck up a friendship with humans, and only rarely would they act up or be vicious in any way. In our countries, horses are raised very differently. Our grooms never enter the stables without storming in, and they do not feel protected unless they have given the horses a hundred blows, a treatment which makes the horses fear and hate men. The Turks taught the horses to go down on their knees so that they could mount them more easily. They showed them how to find with their teeth a stick

15 See Book Two, Chapter Fifteen.

16 Ferdinand I (1503–1564) was Holy Roman Emperor. Suleiman I (1494–1566), Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, also known as Suleiman the Magnificent. Du Bos mistakenly has Suleiman II (1642–1691), Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, but clearly this is the wrong Sultan. Bithnya was a Roman province in Asia Minor that extended to Phrygia, now in Turkey. Hector was a Trojan prince and son of Priam, the legendary king of Troy. His story is recounted in Homer's *Iliad*.

or a branch on the ground to present to the rider; and they put silver rings in the noses of those who had been trained, as a mark of distinction in exchange for their docility. I have seen some of them stand in the same place, without anyone restraining them, after the rider has dismounted. Others went through their routines, obeying all the instructions given by a rider who was standing quite far away." Some lines later, Busbecq said, "Mine give me amusement every evening. They are led into the court, and the one I call by name looks straight at me and neighs. We came to understand one another by means of some slices of melon which I myself put in their mouths." It is hard to believe that the Ambassador did so without speaking to his horses, which drew the reprimand of our censors.

There is no one in the Republic of Letters who has not heard of the Chevalier d'Arvieux [Died in 1701],[17] so famous for his travels, for his work, and for his knowledge of the East. No one will blame me for citing his testimony that shows that people from Asia continue to speak to their horses, just as Hector spoke to his in Asia. After having spoken at length in chapter eleven of his *Memoirs* about the customs and habits of the Arabs, about the docility and, so to speak, calmness of their horses, and the humanity with which their masters treated them, Chevalier d'Arvieux said, "A merchant from Marseille who lived in Rama was engaged in business with an Arab about a mare. This mare was called Touysse. Beyond her beauty, her youth, and her price at twelve hundred écus, she had the reputation of being from first-rate noble stock. Our merchant was in possession of her genealogy and all aspects of maternal and paternal pedigree going back five hundred years, all proven by facts known to the public in the manner I have described. The name of the Arab was Abraham, who frequently went to Rama [A neighbourhood in Palestine] to hear news of that mare that he dearly loved. Many times have I had the pleasure of seeing him crying with tenderness, embracing and caressing the mare. He kissed her, he dabbed his eyes with a handkerchief, he brushed her with the sleeves of his shirt, and he gave her a thousand blessings during the many long hours he spent speaking with her. 'My eyes,' he said to her, 'my soul, my heart, why should it be that I am so miserable to have sold you to so many masters, and not to have kept you for myself. I am poor, my gazelle, as you well know. My sweet, I have raised you in my home as my daughter, I have never scolded, let alone hit you, I have cared for you as best I could. God keep you safe, my good friend. You

17 Laurent d'Arvieux (1635–1702), French traveler and diplomat. A polyglot, d'Arvieux travelled throughout Arab countries and reported on his travels in his memoirs, *Voyage dans la Palestine* [Travels in Palestine], later reprinted as *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux* [Memories of the Chevalier d'Arvieux] in 1735.

are beautiful, you are kind, you are friendly. God keep you from those who are envious, and a thousand other similar things.' He embraced her again, and he stepped backwards while saying his tender good-byes. This made me think of an Arab from Tunisia, where I had been sent to negotiate a peace treaty. The Arab did not want to deliver a mare that we had bought for the King's stud. Just when he put the money in his purse, he cast his eyes upon his horse and began to cry. 'How is it possible,' he said, 'that after having raised you in my home with so much care, and after having asked so much of you, I am now selling you like a slave to the French for money? No, I will not do so, my sweet thing.' At that point, he threw the money on the table, embraced and kissed his horse, and then brought it back to his house." His *Memoirs* of eastern countries are filled with similar stories. Even so! It has not been always and everywhere believed that animals are nothing other than machines. This is one of the discoveries that the new philosophy has made, not on the basis of experiments but solely on the basis of reasoning. Everyone recognizes its progress, so I will say nothing more about it.

It is not enough to have written well to have made judicious criticisms of ancient and foreign poetry. We also need to know about the things of which they speak. What was ordinary in their day, what was common in their countries, may seem to violate *vraisemblance* and reason according to the censors who are unfamiliar with those times and places. Claudius was so surprised that mules obeyed the voice of the mule-driver that he thought he could derive an argument to prove that the history of Orpheus was true:

> *Miraris si voce feras placaverit Orpheus;*
> *Cum pronas pecudes Gallica verba regant*.[18]

It seems that Claudius had trouble believing something that the inhabitants of Provence barely noticed, had he never left Egypt, the country where he was allegedly born. Perhaps his compatriots blamed him for violating *vraisemblance*.

18 Claudian, "Of French Mules," *Carmina minora* 18.19–20: "Are you amazed that Orpheus tamed the wild beasts with his song when the words of a Gaul guide these swift-footed mules?"

CHAPTER 38

That the Remarks of Critics Do Not Make Us Leave Off Reading Poems, and We Stop Reading Only in order to Read Better Poems.

Whatever faults past critics have found, and future critics will find, in the writings of the ancients, they will not make us leave off reading them. We will continue to read and admire them, at least until future poets produce something better. These 'geometrical' critics did not give our ancestors a distaste for Ronsard's poems and make them stop reading him. Rather, it was poems more interesting than Ronsard's. The comedies of Molière turned us against those of Scarron[1] and the other poets who preceded Molière; it was not books that drew our attention to the flaws of these pieces. When some poetical works appear that are better than those already in the hands of the public, it is not necessary for critics to advise them to leave the good and take up the better. People do not need to be enlightened about the merits of two poems in the way that they need to be enlightened about two philosophical theories. The public discerns merit, and judges poems, with the assistance of sentiment, much better than critics can do by means of rules. If someone wants to diminish the admiration that people have for the *Aeneid* and steal its readers, then he can write a better poem. He must rise higher than Virgil and his peers on his own wings. It is not good enough to fly like the raven who rode on the back of the eagle, catching a ride with Jupiter's bird, and then taunting that his wings took him higher.

Let the poet choose from modern history a new subject, so that he cannot appropriate the ancients' ideas or poetical turns of phrase. He could write a poem on the destruction of the Catholic League by Henry IV.[2] The conversion of this prince followed by the capture of Paris would be the poem's natural denouement. A person, able by virtue of his genius, to be a great poet, and who can draw from his own depths all of the beauties necessary to sustain great fiction, would be better off addressing such a subject than in handling subjects

1 Paul Scarron, also known as Monsieur Scarron, (1610–1660), French poet and novelist.

2 The Catholic League, which was begun by Henry III in 1576, was formed with the intention of extirpating Protestants from Catholic France. Protestant denominations, such as the Huguenots, were illegal in France until the Edict of Nantes in 1598, which guaranteed religious freedom and civil rights throughout France.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_093

from mythology or Greek and Roman history. He will not need to avoid clashing with others. Rather than borrowing Greek and Roman heroes, he should dare to make heroes of our kings and princes.

Homer did not sing of Ethiopian or Egyptian battles. He sang of those of his compatriots. Virgil and Lucan took their subjects from the history of Rome. We should dare to sing of things before our eyes, such as our battles, our festivals, and our ceremonies. We should give poetic descriptions of the buildings, rivers, and countries that we see every day. We can then confront, so to speak, the original with the imitation. With what nobility and pathos would Virgil have treated the appearance of the apparition of St. Louis to Henry IV on the eve of the battle of Yvri, when this prince, most glorious ancestor of our holy king, still professed the faith of Geneva. With what elegance would Virgil have depicted the virtues, in festive robes and conducted by Clemency, opening the doors of his city of Paris to this good king! The interest that everyone would, for various reasons, take in this subject would guarantee the public's attention for this work. But the reasons expressed in these *Reflections*, and past experience, sufficiently show that the possibility of a French epic poem that is better than the *Aeneid* is only a logical possibility. It is like the possibility of moving the earth, given a fixed point in space.

As long as we cannot write better than, or even as well as, the ancients, people will continue to read and admire them. This veneration will always be increased as centuries pass without anyone appearing who can match them. We do not esteem these works because they were produced in certain eras. Rather, we revere certain eras for having produced these works. We do not admire the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and some other writings because they were written a long time ago. Rather, it is because reading shows them to be admirable, because all people who have understood them have admired them in all times. Finally, it is because several centuries have passed without anyone having equalled their authors in this genre of poetry.

CHAPTER 39

That There Are Professions Whose Success Depends More On Genius Than On the Assistance That Art Can Give; and Others, Whose Success Depends More On the Assistance Drawn from Art Than On Genius. We Should Not Infer That One Era Surpasses Another in Professions of the First Type Because It Surpasses It in Professions of the Second Type.

What I say here about poets, historians, and excellent orators does not apply to all ancient writers. For example, those books of the ancients on science, whose value consists in their multitudes of facts, are not superior to those written by modern authors on the same sciences. I would also be little surprised if a man, who had formed an opinion on the value of the ancients on the basis of their writings on physics, botany, geography, and astronomy, because his profession required him to engage in a study of those sciences, did not admire the breadth of ancient knowledge. Similarly, I would be unsurprised to see a man, who had formed an opinion on the value of the ancients on the basis of their writings on history, eloquence, and poetry, become filled with admiration for them. The ancients were unknowledgeable in the sciences just mentioned, compared to the things that we know. Led on by a natural human itch to draw conclusions beyond what they knew, the ancients fell, as I have already said, into multiple errors.

Astronomy today knows everything Ptolemy knew, and also knows all the discoveries made since Antoninus,[1] whether by the help of travel or by the aid of telescopes. If he were to return to the world, Ptolemy would become a student at the observatory. There are also anatomists, navigators, botanists, and all those who profess the sciences, whose value consists in knowing, rather than in creating and making. But there are other professions whose most recent practitioners do not have the same advantage over their predecessors, because the

1 Antoninus Pius (86–161), Roman emperor, known as one of the Five Good Emperors.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_094

progress that can be made in these sorts of professions depends more on the talent for invention and natural genius of those who practice them, than on the state of perfection in which these professions find themselves at the end of the day. The man born with the most fortuitous genius is one who goes further than others in these sorts of professions. He does so independently of the degree of perfection they have attained when he practices them. It is enough for him that the profession he chooses already is distilled into an art, and that the practice of that art has a method. He could himself invent the art and write up its method. The power of his genius that makes him devise and imagine an infinite number of things which are inaccessible to ordinary minds, gives him a greater advantage over ordinary minds who will practice the same art after it has been brought to perfection. They could not have an advantage over him, even by their knowledge of new discoveries or by new ideas by which the art is enriched, when they come to practice it themselves. Whatever gives perfection to any one of the arts of which we are speaking, cannot help ordinary minds, at least not to the extent that mental superiority and natural insight can assist a man of genius.

Such are the professions of the painter, poet, general, musician, orator, and doctor. One becomes a great general or great orator from practicing these professions with the genius that is proper to each of them, in whatever state of the art that instructs them is found. The value of famous craftsmen and great men, of whom I just spoke, in all these professions mainly depends on the portion of genius that they have had since birth. On the other hand, the value of the botanist, physicist, astronomer, and chemist primarily depends on the state of perfection at which fortunate discoveries and hard work of others have brought the science that they set out to cultivate. History confirms what I have said here about all the professions that depend primarily on genius.

Among the professions that I have cited as the primary homes of genius, medicine seems the most dependent upon the state of medical science when someone goes to practice it. But if we go into further detail about this art, we find that its operations are even more dependent upon a particular genius, in proportion to which each doctor profits from the knowledge of others, and in proportion to his own experiences, rather than on the state of medical science, when he practices it.

The three parts of medicine are knowledge of illnesses, remedies, and the application of the remedy appropriate to the illness one wants to cure. Discoveries made since the time of Hippocrates in anatomy and chemistry have really helped our knowledge of illnesses. Today we know thousands of remedies of which Hippocrates had never heard, and whose number vastly surpasses that of the remedies he knew and we have lost. Chemistry has furnished one part

of these new remedies, and we owe the other to regions that were unknown to Europeans just two centuries ago. Our doctors nevertheless agree that Hippocrates' aphorisms are the work of a man more capable than today's doctors. They admire, without trying to equal, his practice and his predictions on the course and outcome of illnesses, though he made them with less assistance than today's doctors who make their prognostics. Even though Hippocrates' knowledge was more limited at the time he was writing, no one would hesitate if he were asked whether he would prefer to be treated for some acute illness by Hippocrates, or by the most capable doctor that can be found in Paris or London. Everyone would want to be in the hands of Hippocrates. It is because the talent for discerning the temperament of the illness, the nature of the air and its present temperature, the symptoms of illness as well as the instinct for choosing the right remedy and its time of application, all depend on genius. Hippocrates was born with a superior genius for medicine, and that genius gave him greater advantage in his practice over all modern doctors than all the new discoveries are able to give them over Hippocrates.

People crassly say that if Caesar came back to life and saw firearms and modern fortifications, in short, all the weaponry we use to attack and to defend, he would be completely shocked. He would have to start his apprenticeship all over again, people add, and it would be a long time before he would be capable of leading two thousand men into battle. Not at all, said Maréchal Vauban, who knew the force of Caesar's genius well, as he had a good share of it himself.[2] Caesar would learn in just six months everything that we know; and as soon as he had learned how to use our weapons, and had become acquainted with the nature of our projectiles and shields, his genius would put them to uses that perhaps we have not even recognized.

Although the art of painting today contains thousands of observations and facts that were not known in Raphael's time, we do not see our painters equalling that agreeable genius. Supposing we were to know something about the art of arranging the plot of a poem, and of giving characters decent morals that the ancients did not know, still, they must have surpassed us if it is true that they had superior genius. And even more so, since it is certainly true that the languages in which they wrote were better suited to poetry than the languages in which we write. Perhaps we make fewer mistakes than them, but we could not achieve the degree of excellence they did. Our students are better

2 Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707), Marshal of France and the leading military engineer. On the basis of fifty years of military experience, de Vauban wrote *De L'Attaque et de la defense des places* [The Attack and Defense of Locations], which was first published in 1737 and reprinted many times.

taught than theirs, but our teachers are less capable. "Many of these great natural Genius's … are to be found among the Ancients," said one of the great English poets, "and in particular among those of the more Eastern parts of the World. Homer has innumerable flights that Virgil was not able to reach, and in the Old Testament we find several passages more elevated and sublime than any in Homer" [Addison, *Spectator* 3 September, 1711]. Indeed, Racine appears to be a greater poet in *Athaliah* than in his other tragedies,[3] only because his subject is drawn from the Old Testament, which authorized him to embellish his verses with sturdier figures and the more lofty imagery of sacred scripture, compared to what he could use only very soberly in his profane works. We listened with respect to the eastern style in the mouth of *Athaliah*'s characters, and this style was charming. In the end, said the English author I just quoted, we may be more precise than the ancients, but we could not be more sublime. I know not by what fate all the great poets of modern nations agree to place what the ancients wrote so far above what they themselves composed. In truth, it amounts to a confession that one is incapable of writing in the style of the ancients to try to degrade them. Quintilian said that Seneca never stopped disparaging the great men that preceded him, because he rightly saw that their works and his own were of completely different tastes, that either one or the other must be disagreeable to his contemporaries. Actually, these contemporaries could not have admired the brilliant faults and bristling style in Seneca's writings, which declare the decline of minds as much as they continue to admire the noble and simple style of the writers of the Era of Augustus. *Quos ille non destiterat incessere, cum diversi sibi conscius generis placere se in dicendo posse iis quibus illi placerent, diffideret* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 10].[4]

End of Book Two

3 *Athalie* (1691) is Racine's final play. It draws loosely on Christian scripture and is considered to be a masterpiece.

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.126 "Which writers he had never stopped criticizing, because he knew that his own style was quite different and did not feel confident of pleasing those who were pleased by them."

BOOK 3

Preface

The music of the ancients was a much more extensive discipline than is our music. Today, music teaches only two things: the writing of musical compositions, or 'music' properly speaking, and the performance of these compositions, either by singing or playing instruments. The discipline of music had, among the Greeks and Romans, a much wider scope. It included everything that ours does, but it taught many things that ours does not teach. This is either because we no longer study a part of these things, or because the art that teaches some of these things is no longer regarded as a part of music and we no longer give the title of a musician to those who profess this art. In antiquity, poetry was one of the arts that came under music. Consequently, music taught the writing of all kinds of verse. The art of *saltation*, or the art of acting, was one of the musical arts. Thus, those who taught the steps and gestures of our dance, or dance properly speaking, which was part of the art of acting, were called musicians. Finally, it taught the composition of notated plain declamation, which we no longer know how to do today. Aristides Quintilianus[1] has left us an excellent Greek book on music. This author lived during the reign of Domitian or during that of Trajan, according to the well-reasoned conjecture of Meibomius,[2] who has published, together with a Latin translation, the work of which I speak. According to Aristides, most of the authors who had preceded him would define music thus: an art that teaches how to use the voice and how always to comport oneself gracefully. *Ars decori in vocibus et motibus* [Aristides, Book 1].[3]

People do not usually have the conception of Greek and Roman music that I have just presented and believe that it was confined within the same limits as ours and they have difficulties explaining what the ancients said about their music and how they used it in their day. Consequently, commentators have poorly understood passages of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and passages of Cicero, Quintilian, and the better writers of antiquity. Commentators imagine that these passages are concerned with our dance or our song, that is, dance and song

1 Aristides Quintilianus (2nd or perhaps 3rd century AD), Greek musicologist and author *of Perì Musikês* [On Music]. This work is a principal source of information about music in the ancient world.

2 Marcus Meibomius (ca. 1630–ca. 1710), Danish scholar now best known as a musicologist. Du Bos refers to *Antiquae Musicae Auctores Septem. Graece et Latine* [Seven Ancient Authors, Greek and Latin] (Amsterdam: 1652).

3 Meibomius, *Seven Ancient Authors*, Book 1.6: "An art for grace in utterances and movements." Latin corrected.

properly speaking. They have never understood the real meaning of these passages. The exegesis that they have given serves only to render the passages more obscure. The exegesis serves only to prevent us from ever understanding the manner in which dramas were performed in the ancient theatre.

I dare undertake to make all of these passages intelligible, especially those that speak of theatrical productions. Here is the plan of my work.

First, I will provide a general idea of musical theory and the musical arts, that is, the arts that the ancients included under the discipline of music. If I say nothing, or very little, about all of the principles of consonances and harmonies, this is only because I have nothing to change in, or add to, the accounts that Meibomius, Brossard, Burette,[4] and other modern writers have given of the works that the ancients wrote concerning harmony, and which have come down to us.

Second, I will argue that ancients composed and notated their theatrical declamation. They did so in such a manner that the actors could be, and in fact were, supported by accompanists.

Third, I will show that the ancients had completely reduced the art of acting or *saltation*, one of the arts included under the discipline of music, to a rule-governed activity. In the performance of several scenes they could divide, and in fact divided, the theatrical declamation between two actors. The first spoke while the second made gestures suited to the meaning of the spoken text. They even formed troupes of pantomimes, or actors who acted whole pieces without speaking.

I will conclude my book with several observations on the advantages and disadvantages that result from ancient practices.

4 Sébastien de Brossard (1655–1730), French composer and music theorist. He wrote a *Dictionnaire de musique, contenant une explication des Termes Grecs, Latins, Italiens, & François, les plus usitez dans la Musique* [Dictionary of music, containing an explication of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French terminology mostly widely used in music] (Amsterdam: 1703). Pierre-Jean Burette (1665–1747), French physician and history of antiquity. He produced a translation of Plutarch's *Dialogue on Music* (1735).

CHAPTER 1

The General Concept of Ancient Music, and of the Musical Arts Embraced under This Discipline.

The treatise on music written in Greek by Aristides Quintilianus, translated into Latin by Meibomius, is the most informative remaining ancient work on this discipline. To my mind, it is the most systematic of these works. Since its author, a Greek, lived during the Roman era, Rome had, at that time, conquered all of the Greek lands, and he was a subject of the successors of Augustus, he had to know how music was employed in Rome and Greece. Thus, on the basis of this book we form a general idea of ancient music. Besides, Roman music was the same as that of the Greeks, from whom they took this discipline. In both nations it had the same extent and principles. Consequently, we can clarify the extent and use of ancient music whether Greek or Latin. Aristides Quintilianus defined music as an art, but an art that demonstrates the principles on which it is based [*Antiquae Musicae Auctores Septem*, 1]. This art teaches everything related to the use of the voice and also how gracefully to make all bodily movements. He also relates some other definitions of music that differ a little from his. These definitions also presuppose that this discipline has the extent that we give it.

Latin authors say the same thing. Music, according to Quintilian the orator, does not only teach all of the inflexions of which the voice is capable. It also regulates all bodily movements. These inflections and movements need to be managed by a clear and precise method. *Numeros musice duplices habet in vocibus et in corpore, utriusque enim rei aptus quidam modus desideratur* [*Inst.* Bk. 1, ch. 12. *On Music and its Praises*].[1] This author adds a few lines later: "Decorum in face and gesture is necessary to the orator, and only music can teach him this decorum." *Corporis quoque aptus et decens motus, qui dicitur εὐρυθμία*, [*et*] *est necessarius nec aliunde peti potest*.[2]

St. Augustine, in his work on music, said the same thing as Quintilian. He wrote that music provides rules for demeanour, gesture and, in short, all bodily

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.22: "Music has patterns of two kinds, in sounds and in the movement of the body, for both need proper control of some kind." Latin corrected.

2 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 1.10.26: "Moreover, an apt and becoming movement of the body—what the Greeks call *eurhythmia*—is essential, and cannot be obtained from any other source." Latin corrected.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_096

movements that could be reduced to a theory and practical method. *Musica est scientia bene movendi ….quidquid numerose servatis temporum atque intervallorum dimensionibus movetur* [*On Music*. Bk. 1].[3] The music of the ancients regulated all bodily movements, just as it regulates movements of our dancers' feet.

The discipline of music or, if you like, theoretical music, is called musical harmony, because it teaches all of the principles of harmony and the general rules of all types of consonances. What it teaches is called *composition*. Pieces produced by composition were sometimes called, as we presently call them, absolute music. So the ancients divided music, in the sense just explained, into three genres: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic. The difference between the genres was that one permitted certain notes that the other did not allow in its pieces. In diatonic music, there was an interval of at least a major semitone between successive notes. Chromatic music employed minor semitones [Brossart, *Diction. of Music*];[4] but in enharmonic music, quartertones were employed.[5] The ancients also divided their musical compositions into several genres, according to mode or scale. They named these modes on the basis of the countries where they were mainly used. They were named the Phrygian, Dorian, and others. But I will content myself with referring the reader to modern writers who have discussed in detail the musical harmony of the ancients. In this way we proceed more quickly to what I have to say concerning ancient musical arts, which is the main goal of my essay.

As soon as music embraced such a vast subject, it was natural that it encompassed several arts, each of which had its own goal. Thus, Aristides Quintilianus

3 Augustine, *On Music* 1.3.4: "Music is the knowledge of moving well … whatever is moved rhythmically with maintained measures of times and intervals." Latin corrected. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), also known as St. Augustine, theologian and philosopher.

4 Brossard, *Dictionary of Music*, 33: "ENHARMONICO, in other words ENHARMONIC. This is one of three types of music in which modulation proceeds by intervals smaller than the semitone, that is, by quarter-tone; this is why there are two *dieses* or two signs for raising the voice that are particular to each. See above on DIESES. This genre was in high use in Greek music, mostly for dramatic or recitative music. But since these nearly undetectable elevations of the voice are very difficult, often they produce inaccurate harmonies; since then its use has been lost, and there have been some efforts from time to time by famous authors to resuscitate it."

5 Talk about major and minor semitones needs to be understood in the context of Pythagorean tuning. In modern music, a semitone is the difference between two adjacent notes in twelve-tone scale. If equal temperament is used, all semitones are equal. In Pythagorean tuning, the situation is different since two sorts of semitones are employed: the Pythagorean diatonic semitone (also known as the minor semitone) and the Pythagorean chromatic semitone (also known as the major semitone). A quartertone, half a semitone, is not used in modern Western music.

identified six arts in the category of music. Of these six arts, three taught all sorts of composition. *Porro activum secatur in usuale, quod praedictis utitur atque Enunciativum. Usualis partes sunt, Melopaeïa, Rithmopaeïa, Poesïs, Enunciativi; Organicum, Odicum, Hypocriticum* [Aristid. Bk. 1].[6]

Thus music, with respect to composition, is divided into the art of melopoeia, or songs, rhythmic art, and poetic art. With respect to performance, music is divided into the art of playing instruments, the art of singing, and the hypocritical art,[7] or the art of gesture.

Melopoeia, or the art of composing melody, was the art of composing and notating all sorts of songs. That is, not only musical song, or song, properly speaking, but also all types of recitation and declamation.

Rhythmic art provided rules to subject to a certain rhythm all movements of the body and voice, in such a way that one could beat time to them, and the tempo of the beat was suitable and adapted to each subject.

Poetical art taught the mechanics of poetry. Thus, it showed how to compose, in a regular manner, all types of verses.

We have already seen that, in relation to performance, music was divided into three arts: the art of playing instruments, the art of singing, and the art of gesture.

It is easy to see what lessons could be given by instrumental music, which taught how to play musical instruments, and the music that was called the art of singing. Hypocritical music or counterfeiting was so-called because it was the music of actors and the Greeks usually called them hypocrites or counterfeiters. This was the art of gesture and it showed how to execute, according to the rules of a method established by certain principles, actions that today we make by instinct or, at most, by habit assisted and supported by some observations. The Greeks called this musical art *orchesis* and the Romans *saltatio*.

Porphyry,[8] who lived about two hundred years after Aristides Quintilianus, has left us a *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* [*Commentary on Harm. Ptol.*

6 Aristides, in *Seven Ancient Authors* vol. 1, 6. Latin corrected: "… The usual demonstrative components are composition, rhythmic art, poetry, instruments, song, and gesture." Translation incomplete.

7 Hypocritical music was one of the divisions of music in ancient Greece. According to the division made by Aristides Quintilianus: music first divides into theoretical and practical parts. Theory divides into natural and artificial parts, where the artificial part divides into harmony, rhythm, and tempo. Hypocritical music is one of the three parts of narrative music, which is a sub-part of the practical part of music. Hypocritical music denotes acting or feigning, and is often associated with the art of miming. Du Bos' source is *Seven Ancient Authors* (see n. 2).

8 Porphyry of Tyre (ca. 234–305), Neo-Platonic philosopher. He wrote on a wide range of philo-

p. 191].[9] He divides the musical arts into five different arts: metrical art; rhythmic art; instrumental art; the art of poetry, broadly construed; and the hypocritical art. Compared to Aristides, Porphyry identifies two fewer arts. These are the art of composing melopoeia and the art of song. Notwithstanding the omission of these two arts, Porphyry still identifies five musical arts rather than the four he should count after this reduction. This is because he adds the metric art, which is not mentioned by Aristides. But this difference in listing the musical arts does not prevent our authors from saying fundamentally the same thing. Let us explain this matter.

Since Porphyry says that he takes poetical art in its broadest sense, as he takes care to say, he ought not to have spoken of melopoeia, or the art of composing melody, as a distinct art. This is because melopoeia was included in the art of poetry, in its broadest sense. In fact, according to the practice of the Greeks, the art of composing melopoeia, comprises part of the art of poetry. Below we will see that Greek poets notated the melopoeia of their pieces. If, on the contrary, Aristides distinguishes the art of poetry and the art of melopoeia, two distinct arts, this is because he followed the Roman practice, which was that dramatic poets did not notate the declamation of their verses. The declamation was notated by professional composers whom Quintilian called *artifices pronuntiandi*.[10] We will go into this in more detail later.

For the same reason, Porphyry does not follow Aristides and classify the art of song as a distinct musical art. Apparently people who, in ancient Greece, taught poetical art broadly understood also taught the art of executing well all sorts of song and declamation.

In his turn, Porphyry distinguished two rhythmic arts, where Aristides had identified only one. Porphyry distinguished metre and the art of rhythm, properly speaking, where Aristides identified only one art, which he called *rithmopoeia*. The reason for this is as follows. The progress that the art of pantomimes made, either during the reign of Augustus, or during the two centuries from the time of Porphyry to that of Aristides, had led theatre people to subdivide the art of rhythm into two distinct arts. The first of these arts was metre,

---

sophical and scientific subjects, including this work on musical theory. For a modern edition, with translation, see Andrew Barker, *Porphyry's Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* (Cambridge: 2015).

9 Porphyry, *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* 1.1: "People have generally divided musical science into the following branches: the enterprise called 'harmonics', rhythmics and metrics, the study of instruments, the study of what is called 'composition' in the special sense applicable here, and the study of its performance; for all artists in these fields are called 'musicians.'"

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.73: "artists of proclaiming."

or measure, and taught how to bring under a certain rule-governed measure all types of movements and sounds that can be made to follow a beat. The other was the rhythmic art. It only taught how to beat this measure and, mainly, how to beat a suitable tempo. Below we will see what, in the view of ancients, this *tempo* was. It was the most important part of the performance of music and the invention of the art of pantomime would have led them to make a profound study of everything that could be perfected in the art of movement. We can say that it is certain that, from the reign of Augustus until the complete collapse of the Western Empire, performances of pantomimes were the favourite pastimes of the Romans.

Thus I conclude that the difference that we find between the list of the musical arts in Aristides Quintilianus and that in Porphyry is only an apparent difference. At root, these two authors do not contradict each other.

I will interrupt myself here to make an observation. Ancient music gave systematic lessons on so many things, and provided precepts useful to a grammarian and necessary to a poet, and all those who had to speak in public. So we should not be surprised that the Greeks and Romans [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 1, ch. 12][11] believed that it was an essential art and that they praised it in ways that are not appropriate to our music. We should not be astonished that Aristides Quintilianus wrote [*On Music*. Bk. 1] that music is an art necessary in all ages of life, since it teaches both what children must learn and what adults must know.

For the same reason, Quintilian wrote that, not only is it necessary to know music to be an orator, but one could not be a good grammarian without having learned it. This is because one could not teach grammar well without demonstrating the use of metre and rhythm. *Tum neque citra musicen grammatice potest esse perfecta, cum ei de metris rhythmisque dicendeum sit* [*Inst*. Bk. 1, ch. 3].[12] This judicious writer even observed in another place that in earlier times, the profession of teaching music and that of the grammar teacher were one and the same, and the same teacher taught them.

Finally, Quintilian said, in the chapter of his book in which he intended to prove that the orator is at least required to learn something of music: "No one will deny that those who claim to be orators must read and understand the poets. Does not music govern the composition of poems of whatever type? If someone is unreasonable enough to say that, in general, the rules that a poet follows in composing his verses do not apply to music, at least he would not deny that the rules that the poet must follow in writing verses that are made

11 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.9–34.

12 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.4.4: "Again, *grammatice* cannot be complete without music, because it has to discuss metre and rhythm."

to be performed with an accompaniment belong to this fine art." *Poetas certe legendos oratori futuro concesserint: num* [*igitur*] *hi sine musice? ac si quis tam caecus animi est, ut de aliis dubitet, illos certe, qui carmina ad lyram composuerunt* [*Inst*. Bk. 1, ch. 12].[13] This passage will be a lot clearer when one has read what I have to say concerning the *carmen* or notated declamation of verses intended to be performed with an accompaniment.

In short, the writings of the ancients clearly state [Luciani *Gymnast*. Plutar. *On Music*][14] that music was in their time an art necessary for cultured people. They regarded people who did not know music as uneducated people. They were regarded as we currently regard people who do not know how to read. I return to the musical arts.

Unfortunately for us, no manuals that the many Greek and Roman teachers had for teaching these arts have come down to us. Moreover, the ancient authors who wrote on music, and whose works survive, have little to say on the practice of the arts governed by the discipline of music. They regarded these arts as easy, widely known, and suitable only for the talents of a hired tutor. For example, St. Augustine, who wrote a six-part work on music, said that he would treat none of these practices since they were widely known by the most mundane troupers. *Non enim tale aliquid hic dicendum est, quale quilibet cantores histrionesque noverunt* [*On Music*. Bk. 1].[15]

The authors of whom I speak wrote more as philosophers. They reason and speculate about the general principles of an art, the practice of which is known to all of their contemporaries. They are not authors whose works are intended to teach the art that they discuss without any further assistance.

However, I hope that with the aid of facts reported by ancient writers, who occasionally spoke of music, I can manage to give an idea, if not full and complete, at least clear and distinct, of these arts. I also hope to explain how dramas were performed in the ancient theatre.

We have seen that Aristides Quintilianus identified six musical arts: the art of rhythm, the art of melopoeia, poetry, the art of playing instruments, the art

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.29. This badly garbled quotation has been corrected, as has the citation. Du Bos gives a loose paraphrase of Quintilian's text and the paraphrase is translated. This is a literal translation: "They will at any rate admit that the poets should be read by our future orator. Yet surely poets are not without music? But if any of my critics are so blind as to have some doubts about other poets, they will admit that surely those, who composed songs for the lyre, possess music."

14 Lucian of Samosata (AD 125–180), Greek rhetorician and satirist. Du Bos refers to a work sometimes translated as *Anacharsis, or Athletics*.

15 Augustine, *On Music* 1.2: "For anything of the sort that singers and actors know, should not be discussed here."

of song, and the art of gesture. We, however, reduce these six to four. We do not count the art of poetry, and we count the arts of melopoeia and the art of song as one and the same art. We have already seen that the art of poetry, the art of melopoeia, and the art of song had so much in common that Porphyry regards them as a single art. He calls this poetry, broadly conceived.

CHAPTER 2

Of Rhythmic Music.

We have already said that rhythmic music provided rules subjecting to a given metre the voice and all bodily movements. It did so in such a way that one could beat time. Musical rhythm, said Aristides, regulates gesture as well as recitation. Thus, this art teaches all of the uses that one can make of metre and tempo. From what we will subsequently say on this matter, the ancients made a big deal of this art. St. Augustine said the following, in the part of his retractions where he speaks of the book he had written on music: his principal goal had been to discuss the wonderful assistance that we can receive from metre and tempo. *Et de musica sex volumina quantum attinet ad eadem partem, quae rithmus vocatur* [*Retractions*, Ch. 5].[1]

The Greeks, like us, recognized four features of music: the progression of notes in the main subject, or the melody, the harmony, or the consonance between different musical lines, metre, and tempo. Rhythmic art taught the last two. As we have already noted, Porphyry divided rhythmic art into two: metrical art or metre, or measure, and rhythmic art, or the art of tempo.

Plato [Plat. *On Law*. Bk. 2],[2] to indicate that tempo is the soul of musical song, wrote that the beat is the soul of metre. Metre, wrote Aristotle, is only a part of rhythm [*Poet*. ch. 4].[3] Quintilian, if I understand him correctly, says that one measure must not borrow from another, but the person who beats the metre is free to quicken or slow down the tempo. *Rhythmis libera spatia, metris finita sunt* [*Instit*. bk. 9, ch. 4].[4] Aristides Quintilianus, following several others, wrote that metre differs from rhythm, as the whole differs from its part. *Porro ex pedibus constant metra … differre autem metra a rithmo aiunt alii ut a toto partem* [Arist. Bk. 1].[5] But, just as we sometimes use 'tempo' simpliciter to speak of measure and tempo, the Greeks also sometimes spoke of rhythm *tout court* when speaking of rhythm and metre. Taking the word 'rhythm' in this sense, Aristo-

1 Augustine, *Retractions* 1.5.3: "And six volumes on music so much as pertains to the part which is called rhythm." Latin corrected.

2 Plato, *Laws* 2.664e–665a: "Now the order of motion is called rhythm."

3 Aristotle, *Poetics* 4.1448b: "We have, then, a natural instinct for tune and rhythm—for the metres are obviously sections of rhythms."

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.50: "In rhythms, the space available is unrestricted, in metre it is limited."

5 Aristides, *On Music* 1.49: "Furthermore metres consist of feet … However, others say that metres differ from rhythm just as a part differs from the whole."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_097

tle wrote in his *Poetics* that music imitates with melody, harmony, and rhythm, just as painting imitates with lines and colours.[6]

The Romans often used Greek terms in speaking of music and certainly knew their etymology. They knew that these terms could change their literal meaning. St. Augustine clearly says that in his time the practice was to apply the word 'rhythm' to everything that governed the duration of a composition's performance. *Rhythmi enim nomen in musica usque adeo late patet, ut haec tota pars eius quae ad diu et non diu pertinet, rhythmus nominata sit* [*On Music*. Bk. 2].[7]

Nothing is as common, in all languages, as using the name of a species for a genus, and the name of a genus to be attributed to a species, in ordinary usage.[8] Without straying too far from our subject, we can see that the Romans gave the word *modulatio* a sense more extensive than its initial meaning. The Romans called melody *soni* or *voces*; harmony, *concentus*; and metre, *numeri*.

In one of his *Eclogues*, Virgil has Lycidas say to Moeris, "What of the lines I heard you singing in the cloudless night? The tune I remember, could I but recall the words."

> *Quid, quae te pura solum sub nocte cantentem*
> *audieram? numeros memini, si verba tenerem*.
> [*Eclog*. 9][9]

He only means to have Lycidas say that, although he had forgotten the words of the verses in question, he nevertheless remembered well the feet[10] or metre, and consequently their cadence.[11] Thus, *modi*, a word the Latins often used in

---

6 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a: "For just as by the use both of colour and form people represent many objects, making likenesses of them—some having a knowledge of art and some working empirically—and just as others use the human voice; so is it also in the arts which we have mentioned, they all make their representations in rhythm and language and tune, using these means either separately or in combination."

7 Augustine, *On Music* 3.1.2: "For rhythm's name in music applies to much, so that this whole part of what pertains to the long and not long has been named rhythm."

8 In Aristotle's *Categories*, a genus is a general category. A species is a specific sort of thing that belongs to the genus.

9 Virgil, *Eclogue* 9.44–45: "What of the lines I heard you singing alone beneath the cloudless night? The tune I remember, could I but keep the words."

10 A foot is a pattern of stressed (long) and unstressed (short) syllables. For example, a spondee is a foot consisting of two stressed syllables and a dactyl is a foot consisting of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. Combinations of feet are poetical metres. For example, dactylic pentametre is a pattern consisting of five dactyls in a line.

11 From the 1694 *Dictionary of the Academie française*: "the end or the fall of a passage or of

speaking of their music, correctly means only tempo. However, they refer to the measure and tempo as the *modi*. Sometimes they even give the name *modulation* to the whole composition, without regard to the etymology of 'modulation.'

Let us conclude, first of all, that *modulation* properly speaking means only the metre and tempo, which Porphyry calls rhythm. Secondly, despite this, the Romans often called an entire musical composition a modulation. On more than one occasion, we need to assume that ancients allowed this sort of imprecision.

Quintilian reports that Aristoxenus,[12] who, according to Suidas,[13] was a student of Aristotle, wrote a book on music found in the collection of Meibomius. Aristoxenus divides vocal music into rhythm and melody. Rhythm, Quintilian adds, is what we call *modulation* and verse set to music [*le chant assujetti ou noté*] is what we call scale and song. *Vocis rationem Aristoxenus musicus dividit in ῥυθμόν et μέλος, quorum alterum modulatione, alterum canore ac sonis constat* [*Instit*. Bk. 1, ch. 12].[14]

When Quintilian intends to say that he does not require his orator to have an in-depth knowledge of music, he says that he does not ask him to have adequate knowledge of modulation to be able to beat the time of choruses [*cantic*] and solos. As we shall see, these were theatrical scenes in which the declamation was more cantabile, that is, more song-like. *Nam nec ego consumi studentem in his artibus volo, nec moduletur aut musicis notis cantica excipiat* [Quint. *Instit*. Bk. 1, ch. 13].[15]

However, and this is my second point, Quintilian frequently calls the whole composition *a modulation*, by which he means the melody, the harmony, the

---

one of its members, which has a certain right measure and a certain number which satisfies the ear. The pace of this passage is beautiful .... The agreeable measure of a long and well-turned line. These lines have the right cadence."

12 Aristoxenus of Tarentum (fl. 335 BC), Greek philosopher and student of Aristotle. He wrote *Elements of Harmony*, part of which survives.

13 Zosimus (fl. late-5th and early-6th centuries), Byzantine historian and lawyer. He is the author of a history of Roman emperors up to 410, *Historia Nova* [New History]. The *Suda* or *Souda* is a combination dictionary and encyclopedia of the 10th century. It was formerly attributed to a writer named Suidas after Eustathius of Thessalonica mistook the title for the name of the author.

14 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.22: "The musical theorist Aristoxenus divides what concerns sound into rhythm and melody, the former comprising the modulation, and the latter the tone and the quality of the sound."

15 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.12.14: "I have no wish for the student to wear himself out with these subjects; he has no need to compose tunes or to take down songs in musical notation."

metre, and the tempo. For example, this author, in his *Institutions of Oratory* 11.3, gives some interesting instructions concerning the care that an orator must take of his voice. He says, with regard to several bad pronunciations, "No form of pronunciation is more disagreeable than hearing theatrical delivery [*chanter le modulation théâtrale*] in schools and law courts. It is the fashionable vice, I grant, but it is nonetheless true that it debases the orator." *Sed quodcumque ex his vitium magis tulerim quam, quo nunc maxime laboratur in causis omnibus scholisque, cantandi, quod inutilius sit an foedius nescio. Quid enim minus oratori convenit quam modulatio scaenica* [*Instit.* Bk. 11, ch. 13].[16] Quintilian includes song or declamation set to music in the *modulation* of which I speak. Here, Quintilian calls the entire composition a *modulation*.

The inscriptions at the head of Terence's comedies said that Flaccus "made the modes" or "modulated them." In other words, Flaccus notated the declamation. *Modos fecit, modulavit Flaccus*.[17]

St. Augustine gives a kind of reason for this practice when he says that everything that a musician does is captured by the term 'modulation.' *Modulatio, quo uno paene verbo tantae disciplinae definitio continetur* [*On Music*. 1].[18]

I could cite several more ancient passages by Latin authors that employ the terms *modi* and *modulatio* in a rather broad sense. But to convince the reader that it was widely used to refer to the entire composition, it suffices to quote the definition that Diomedes the Grammarian, who lived prior to the fall of the Roman Empire, gives of this word. Modulation, said this author, is the art of making a lengthy recital more pleasant and making a sound more pleasing to the ear. *Modulatio est continuati sermonis in iocundiorem dicendi rationem artificialis flexus in delectabilem auditus formam conversus*.[19]

Finally, among the Romans, the term 'modulation' had the same meaning as *carmen*. It is difficult to give a precise translation of this word. Since we do not

16 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.57: "Yet all these faults are tolerable compared with the sing-song manner which is the chief problem in every cause and every school nowadays—and whether it is more useless than disgusting I do not know! What is less becoming to an orator than a theatrical recitative …?" Latin corrected.

17 Flaccus Claudii (fl. 2nd century BC), Roman composer who set some of Terence's comedies to music. "Flaccus composed the melodies, he measured them."

18 Augustine, *On Music* 1.2: "Modulation, which one word nearly contains the definition of such a science."

19 Diomedes Grammaticus (likely fl. late-4th century AD), Latin Grammarian. He is the Author of *Ars grammatica* [The Art of Grammar], 1.439: "Modulation is the skillful bending of continuous sound into more pleasant order of speaking and turning it into a delightful form for hearing."

have such a thing, it does not have its own word to denote it. It means the metre and musical setting of verses. I will soon speak of *carmen*. Let us return to the art of rhythm, or modulation properly speaking.

We know how the ancients measured their vocal music, or words set to music. As we have already observed in speaking of the mechanics of poetry, the syllables had a determinate value in Greek and Latin. This value was even relative, that is, two short syllables must not last longer in speech than one long one. One long syllable had to last as long as two short. The short syllable had a value of one in the metre, a long syllable had a value of two. Children, said Quintilian, are not ignorant of the fact that the long syllable counts for two and the short counts for one. *Longam esse duorum temporum, brevem unius, etiam pueri sciunt* [*Instit*. Bk. 9, ch. 4].[20]

This ratio between long and short syllables was as constant as the ratio is today between two notes of different values. Just as a quarter note has the same duration in our music as a half note, in ancient music two short syllables had to last no more or less than one long. Thus, when Greek and Roman musicians set some piece to music, in order to give it metre, they only had to respect the length of the syllable they set to music. This is why Boethius,[21] who lived during the reign of Theodoric, King of the Visigoths, and when theatres were still open in Rome, said this in speaking about a composer of music who set words to music: Lines already have their metre in virtue of their poetical feet, that is, in virtue of the combination of long and short syllables of which they are notated. *Ut si quando melos aliquod musicus voluisset ascribere super versum rhythmica metri compositione distentum, etc*.[22]

On the other hand, as we have said in speaking of the mechanics of Greek and Roman verse, everyone knew from childhood the duration of each syllable and, which amounted to the same thing, each musical note.

---

20 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.47: "Even schoolboys know that a long syllable occupies two 'times,' and a short syllable one."

21 Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, known as 'Boethius,' (475–526), Roman politician and Neoplatonic philosopher. Best known as the author of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, a prosimetric work in which he depicts himself as a prisoner about to be put to death, in conversation with Lady Philosophy about the purpose of life, free will, and God's governance. He also translated from Greek into Latin a number of Aristotelian logical works. These were transmitted to the Middle Ages and were the basis upon which the study of philosophy resumed in the European west in the 11th and 12th centuries. Du Bos refers to his *De institutione musica* [On the Art of Music], the modern edition of which is by Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig: 1867).

22 Boethius, *On the Art of Music* 4.3: "… a musician who wanted to write down some melody over a verse, set out in the rhythmic structure of some metre …"

One might wonder how many times the Greeks and Romans set to music works of whatever sort. The answer is that when verses are set to music, the metre of the songs was already determined by the poetical feet.[23] Each foot of the line was a measure. In fact, as we shall see below, the word *pes*, which means foot, was used by Quintilian and others to speak of a measure.

Nevertheless, there is an objection to this explanation: on the basis of the words with which they are notated, the measures of some melody must have had unequal durations. Some had three beats, while others had four. In fact, the feet that were only composed of a long syllable and a short, or three short syllables, contained only three beats, while feet composed of long syllables, or a long syllable and two short ones, had four beats. I grant that it could not be otherwise. But this did not prevent the conductor from always accurately keeping time.

As for melodies that set prose to music, the duration of a syllable also determined the value of the note corresponding to this syllable.[24] Perhaps the ancients did not measure songs of this sort and let the conductor beat time in accordance with the principles of rhythmic art, free to mark the end of a passage [*cadence*] after a number of beats that he judged appropriate to unite it, so to speak, into one measure. How long is it since we began measuring our music?[25] This is why the ancients include poetry among the musical arts. This is why most Greeks and Romans who wrote about music discussed at length the duration of syllables, feet, and poetical metres [*figures du vers*], as well as how they can be used to give more charm and more expressiveness to the text. People who are curious about how far the ancients plumbed this matter may read what St. Augustine has written in his book on music.

Besides, we learn from Aristides Quintilianus, and from other authors, that the ancients had a rhythm in which a foot did not always constitute a measure. This was because there were measures composed of eight syllabic beats, that is, eight short syllables or their equivalent. This was a means of solving the problem that arose from the unequal duration found in feet of the same verse. But since this concerns music properly speaking, I refer my reader to the writings of

23 Du Bos' point is that the rhythm of a musical composition was determined by a poetical metre. So, for example, if a poem is written in dactylics is set to music, the rhythm of the resulting song will be determined by the rhythm of a dactylic: a long, short, short pattern (repeated five times per line).

24 For example, a long syllable will be set to a long note.

25 Du Bos refers to the introduction of time signatures. Time signatures date to the 14th century; bar lines corresponding to time signatures did not come into use until the 17th century.

a learned man [Burette of the Academy of Belles-Lettres, Vol. 5 of his *History*][26] who combines a deep knowledge of this discipline with great erudition.

How did the ancients indicate values of notes in their organical or instrumental music? The problem is that these notes could not take their values from the duration of the syllables that they set. I do not know, but I imagine that each *semeia*, or instrumental note, could have its value indicated by dots placed, above, below, or beside each note. Alternatively, the symbols that indicated whether a syllable is short or long could be put above the notes. Everyone knew these symbols from early on in their education. We will speak at length about these *semeia* when we explain how the ancients notated musical song, or song properly speaking, and song that was only to be spoken.

We will be even more eager to understand another thing, namely the way that metrical music marked the beat of all bodily motions. How did they notate these gestures? How did they notate every movement of the feet and hands, each pose and each step with a specific figure that distinctly designated each of these movements? I will content myself with saying that the art of notating gestures or, if you like, the dictionaries of gestures (we will see that the ancients had these dictionaries, if it is permitted to use this expression) was not part of the rhythmic music with which we are presently concerned. It presupposes that the art of notating gestures had already been discovered and employed. The art of hypocritical music or *saltation* taught this sort of writing. So let us leave off speaking of it until we treat the musical arts that the Greeks called *orchesis* and the Romans called *saltatio*. Someone will ask how it was that rhythmic music could be subject to the same measure, and go in step with, the actor who recited and the actor who made the gestures. I answer that this is one of the things that St. Augustine said is known by everyone who appeared on the stage, so he did not bother to explain it. But we no longer have before us the thing in question. Consequently, it is no longer easy to conceive of what, according to Augustine, everyone in his time knew. The passages from ancient authors, that we will relate below, prove that the actor who recited and the actor who gestured coordinated very well and they moved in step with great precision. They do not explain how they followed each other in accordance with a common measure. Nevertheless, Quintilian says something about the principles by means of which they agreed, after they were found and established.

---

26 Du Bos refers to Pierre-Jean Burette's "Dissertation, où l'on fait voir, que les merveilleux effets, attribuez à la musique des anciens, ne prouvent point qu'elle fust aussi parfait que la nôtre" [Dissertation in which one can see that the wonderful effects attributed to ancient music do not prove that it was as perfect as ours], which was published in the *Histoire de l'Academie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 5 (Paris: 1729).

It appears, from reading a passage in Quintilian, that in order to regulate, so to speak, the action, and to permit the person who acted to follow the one who recited, they invented a rule: three words equalled a gesture. As the words had a regulated duration, so gestures also had a fixed, measurable duration. Here is the passage: *Hic veteres artifices illud recte adiecerunt, ut manus cum sensu et inciperet et deponeretur. Alioqui enim aut ante vocem erit gestus aut post vocem, quod est utrumque deforme. In illo lapsi nimia subtilitate sunt, quod intervallum motus tria verba esse voluerunt; quod neque observatur neque fieri potest, sed illi quasi mensuram tarditatis celeritatisque aliquam esse voluerunt, neque immerito, ne aut diu otiosa esset manus aut, quod multi faciunt, actionem continue motu concideret*.[27] "The old experts on this subject rightly added at this point that the hand movement should begin and end with the sense, for otherwise the Gesture will either anticipate the voice or lag behind it, and in either case the result is unsightly. But their excessive subtlety led them into the mistake of recommending an interval of three words between movements; this is not observed, and is impracticable. The fact is that they wanted (very properly) to have some sort of measure of slowness and speed, so that the hand should not rest idle for long or fragment the delivery by continual movement, as is the practice of many speakers."

I have translated Quintilian's word *artifices* as "the first people to compose the words of theatre pieces and to perform them on stage" for two reasons. The first is that Quintilian did not mean to speak of eloquence teachers, for which he had different names in his *Institutes of Oratory*. The second is that in the chapter from which I just quoted, Quintilian very often speaks of practices employed by actors. He calls *artifices* or *artifices pronunciandi*, people whose profession was to produce plays. We will see below one of the passages where Quintilian speaks at great length of the care that these *artifices pronunciandi* took to give each actor a mask corresponding to the character that he plays.

Here is yet another passage from Quintilian which can shed some light on the rules that the rhythmic art had for measuring the beats of the gestures: "Metre is a matter of words only. Rhythm includes movements of the body. Rhythm also more readily allows unoccupied time units; these do occur also in Metre, but there is more freedom in Rhythm, where we measure time units both mentally and by the beat of foot or finger, mark the intervals by signs, and estimate the number of shorts that the space will hold. Hence, we speak of 'four-unit' and 'five-unit' (tetrasemic, pentasemic) rhythms, and indeed longer

27 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.106–107. Du Bos's translation of Quintilian is translated in the next sentences.

ones: *semeion* means a single time unit". *Et quod metrum in verbis modo, rhythmos etiam in corporis motu est. Inania quoque tempora rhythmi facilius accipient, quamquam haec et in metris accidunt. Maior tamen illic licentia est; ubi tempora* [*etiam animo*] *metiuntur et pedum et digitorum ictu, intervalla signant quibusdam notis, atque aestimant quot breves illud spatium habeat: inde tetrasemoe, pentasemoe, deinceps longiore sunt percussiones* (*nam semion tempus est unum*) [*Instit*. Bk. 12, ch. 4].[28]

As I have said, although the fact is certain, it is not possible fully to explain the method, taught by the rhythmic art, that made for a perfect coordination between the actor who spoke and the actor who gestured. Perhaps they added to the symbol, that indicated the gesture that the actor should make, another symbol that indicated the duration of the gesture.

The ancients were as much concerned with tempo as are Lully, Delalande,[29] and the best French musicians. It seems impossible to me that the Romans could specify by means of a symbol the precise duration that each measure must have. Like us, it was necessary for them to leave it to the taste and judgement of the conductor, to the ones who were professionals in the rhythmic art. True, some modern musicians have believed that they could find some secret of specifying the duration of an air besides doing so verbally and, consequently, teaching posterity the tempo at which it should be played. However, these musicians claimed to be able to realize their goal by using a clock. They wanted, for example, to indicate how many seconds the first twenty bars of the chaconne of *Phaeton*[30] ought to last, thus indicating the tempo at which this air for the violin should be played. But without discussing this possibility, I will be content to say that the ancients could not even have conceived of it since their clocks were too inaccurate for them to form a similar idea. We know that, far from having pendulums that mark seconds, they did not even have mechanical clocks. They could only keep time by means of sundials, hourglasses, and water clocks.

We know that the ancients beat time in their theatres and that, by this means, indicated the rhythm that the actor who spoke, the actor who made gestures, the choristers, and even the instruments had to follow a common measure. Quintilian said that the gestures are as subject to the rhythm as the songs. He then added that, the actors who make the gestures must follow the symbols that mark the feet, that is, the beat, with as much precision as those

28 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.50–51.

29 Michel Richard Delalande (or de Lalande) (1657–1726), French organist and composer.

30 *Phaëton* (1683), opera by Lully.

who perform the music. He means by this the actors who speak and the instruments that accompany them. *Atqui corporis quoque motui sunt sua quaedam tempora et ad signandos pedes non minus saltationi quam modulationibus adhibetur musica ratio numerorum* [*Instit*. Bk. 9, ch. 4].[31]

On the other hand, there are two passages from the works of Lucian [*The Dance*],[32] that we call in French, *Traité de la danse* [See Burette's discourse on rhythm],[33] which praises the art of pantomimes. These passages indicate that there was, with the actor who gestured, a man shod with iron shoes who stamped his feet on the stage. Thus, all circumstances lead us to believe that this man beat with his feet a rhythm whose sound must have been heard by everyone who had to follow it.

31 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.139: "Yet the movement of the body also has its own time units, and the musical principle of Rhythm is used to mark out feet in dancing no less than in melody."

32 *In Orchesi* [The Dance]. This work discusses Roman dance and, in particular, pantomime.

33 Du Bos refers to Pierre-Jean Burette, *Dissertation sur le rythme de l'ancienne musique* (Paris, 1725), 152–168. (Dissertation on the rhythm of ancient music).

CHAPTER 3

On Organical or Instrumental Music.

It would be needless to treat the construction of wind or stringed instruments used by the ancients. The matter has been exhausted, whether by Bartholinus the Younger,[1] in his treatise on ancient wind instruments, or by other scholars. I think it best to leave what I have to say about the ancient use of instruments to support actors, who declaim by means of an accompaniment, to that part of this work where I will treat the execution of composite declamation and notation. Indeed, one of the most convincing proofs that I will put forward to show that the ancients composed and wrote simple, theatrical declamation in notation, is to show that this declamation was supported by an accompaniment. When I come to treat the execution of this declamation, I would have to go over the same passages and repeat the same reflections that I have already made, were I to speak of accompaniment here. I will therefore confine myself to saying something on ancient musical compositions, which never set words, and which were meant to be performed only on instruments.

We and the ancients have the same ideas of the end and use of music. Aristides Quintilianus spoke of the many divisions of music made by the ancients, considered under different perspectives. He said that song, or music, according to the spirit in which it was composed, and the effect that one wants it to produce, may be divided into music that brings us pain, music that renders us happy and alive, and music that calms us by appeasing our worries. I will provide Aristides' passage below.

I have already observed in Book One of this work that compositions, insofar as they are musical songs composed with words, have a particular character that makes them capable of affecting us differently, sometimes inspiring in us happiness, sometimes sadness, sometimes martial passion, and sometimes devotional feelings. "We even feel," said Quintilian, the author most capable of providing an account of ancient taste, "that mental attitudes are affected in various ways by instruments which are incapable of articulate speech." *Cum*

1 Caspar Bartholin the Younger, also known by his Latinized name Caspar Bartholin Secundus (1655–1738), member of an eminent family of scholars and medical physicians that included his father, Thomas Bartholin (1616–1680), Danish physician, mathematician, and astronomer, and his grandfather Caspar Bartholin, Sr. (1585–1626), Danish physician, theologian, and polymath. He was the author of *De tibiis veterum et earum antiquo usu* [On Old Flutes and their Ancient Use] (Rome: 1677), a three-volume work on ancient instruments.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_098

organis quibus sermo exprimi non potest, affici animos in diversum habitum sentiamus [*Institut*. Bk. 1, ch. 12].[2]

"We are naturally attracted by harmony," said another author whom we will cite, "for there is no other way in which it could happen that the sounds of musical instruments, without articulating any words, could also excite a succession of varied emotions in the listener. In festival competitions, musicians use different means to excite and to calm the feelings; they have different modes for the call to arms and for the entreaty on bended knee, nor is the signal heard when the army goes into battle the same as the call that sounds the retreat." *Natura ducimur ad modos, neque aliter enim eveniret ut illi quoque organorum soni quanquam verba non exprimunt, in alios atque alios ducerent motus auditorem. In certaminibus sacris, non eadem ratione concitant animos et remittunt, nec eosdem modos adhibent cum bellicum est canendum, aut posito genus supplicandum, nec idem signorum concentus est procedente ad praelium exercitu, idem receptui* [*carmen*] [*Instit*. Bk. 9, ch. 4].[3] Since the ancients did not have firearms whose noise prevented soldiers from paying attention during action, the sound of military instruments was sometimes used to make them aware of commands, and to give them encouragement. The ancients paid attention to this aspect of war, even undertaking research that would be useless to do today. The ruckus made by the canon and the musketry prevents soldiers from hearing signals coming from the drums and trumpets, which beat and sound at the same time. Above all else, the Romans were proud of excelling in military music.

After having said that great generals did not consider it beneath them to play military instruments themselves, and that they made great use of music in the Lacedemonian armies, Quintilian added, "We are told that the greatest generals played on the lyre and the pipe, and that Spartan armies were inspired by the strains of music. And what else is the function of the horns and trumpets in our legions? The more assertive their sound, the more does Roman military glory dominate the world." *Duces maximos et fidibus et tibiis cecinisse traditum, et exercitus Lacedemoniorum musicis accensos modis? Quid autem aliud in nostris legionibus cornua ac tubae faciunt, quorum concentus quanto est vehementior, tanto Romana in bellis gloria caeteris praestat?* [*Instit*. Bk. 1, ch. 12].[4]

Livy recounts a highly pertinent fact to confirm Quintilian's point. Having surprised the city of Tarent, then under Roman rule, Hannibal used a strategy to prevent the garrison from rushing into the fortress of the palace, and thus

2 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.

3 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.4.10–11.

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.14.

making them prisoners of war. After discovering that the Romans used the theatre as an assembly point upon sudden alarm, he ordered the same sound be played that the Romans used when standing to arms. But the garrison soldiers recognized the awful manner with which the trumpet was blown and, upon hearing it, not a single Roman doubted that it was an enemy ruse. They took refuge in the fortress instead of standing to arms.

Longinus spoke of organical music the way we speak of instrumental music. He said that symphonies move us, even if they are only simple imitations of inarticulate sounds, and if we must speak this way, sounds which have only a half-life, or half of their being. This author understood by 'perfect sounds' those he contrasted with symphonic sounds that have but an 'imperfect being.' In perfect sounds, sounds recited in music are found joined with an articulate sound, in which the natural sound has been adapted to words. Here is what Longinus adds to the passage just alluded to: "Does not the flute, for instance, include certain emotions in those who hear it? Does it not seem to carry them away and fill them with divine frenzy? It sets a particular rhythmic movement and forces them to move in rhythm. The hearer has to conform to the tune, though he may be utterly unmusical. Why, the very tones of the harp, themselves meaningless, by the variety of their sounds and by their mutual pulsation and harmonious blending often exercise, as you know, a marvellous spell. Yet these are only a bastard counterfeit of persuasion, not, as I said above, a genuine activity of human nature" [*Traité du Sublime, chap*. 32].[5]

I again report a passage from Macrobius, which might seem superfluous because he says the same thing as did the passages from Quintilian and Longinus we just read; but to me it seems best for silencing those who sow doubt that the ancients meant the same thing by 'music' as we do, or that they had the same idea of this art as Lully and Delalande. Since we do not know how to produce ancient symphonies, lost to the ravages of time, we can only judge their merit on the word of those who listened to them regularly, who saw the effect they produced, and who knew the spirit in which they were composed.

5 Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 39.2–3. *On the Sublime* is a 1st century AD work of literary criticism, typically attributed to Longinus, who remains an unknown figure. The flute, often along with the drum, was the instrument used in orgiastic rites (see Plato, *Republic* 3.398C). The translation reproduced here varies significantly from Du Bos' French translation, which appears to be based on a translation by Boileau made in 1674, *Traité du Sublime or du merveilleux dans le discours*. Compare the first line of Du Bos' translation: "Et de vrai ne voyons-nous pas que le son des instrumens à vent, remue l'ame de ceux qui les entendent, qu'ils les transporte hors d'eux-mêmes, et qu'il les fait entrer quelquefois en une espece de fureur?" with that of Boileau's: "Et de vrai, ne voyons-nous pas que le son des flûtes émeut l'ame de ceux qui l'écoutent, et les remplit de fureur, comme s'ils étoient hors d'eux-mêmes?"

"Thus every disposition of the soul is controlled by song. For instance, the signal for marching into battle and for leaving off battle is in one case a tune that arouses the martial spirit and in the other one that quiets it. 'It gives or takes away sleep,'[6] it releases or recalls cares, it excites wrath and counsels mercy, it even heals the ills of the body, whence the statement that gifted men 'sing out remedies' for the ailing" [*On the dream of Scipio*. Bk. 2, ch. 2].[7] *Ita denique omnis habitus animae cantibus gubernatur, ut et ad bellum progressui, et item receptui canatur cantu, et excitante, et rursus sedante virtutem. Dat somnos adimitque, necnon curas immittit et retrahit, iram suggerit, clementiam suadet, corporum quoque morbis medetur*.

Since it sometimes happens that physical illnesses are caused by mental agitations, it comes as no surprise that music, while soothing mental troubles, on some occasions also soothed and cured physical illnesses. Everyone is convinced by their own experience that music diminishes and dissipates our troubles and bad moods. I know that the circumstances in which music can work effectively on illnesses are rare, and it would be ridiculous to order music and songs as one orders purgatives and bloodletting.[8] Also ancient authors who also spoke of the cures effected by music, spoke of them as extraordinary.

Since miracles of this sort sometimes happen today, the ancients are completely free from suspicion for having believed the cures mentioned here, and for passing off lies and myths as true histories. To speak in passing, this is not the only issue for which our experience has defended them against an accusation of deceit or credulity. Was Pliny the historian not on the side of justice despite many such accusations thrown at him by 16th-century critics?[9] To return to the curing of some illnesses by music: the minutes of the Academy of Sciences[10] in

6 Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.244.

7 Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 2.3.

8 A purgative is a laxative. Bloodletting continued to be used in medical treatment until the end of the 1800s.

9 In the Renaissance, Pliny's *Natural History* was a popular work and a rich resource for descriptions of all parts of the natural and artefactual worlds. Du Bos is referring to philological criticisms of Pliny's Greek, beginning at the end of the 15th century in Italy with *On the errors in medicine in Pliny and many other medical practitioners* by Niccolò Leoniceno (1428–1524). Much debate about the value of Pliny's work ensued, and the "result of this debate was a growing public recognition that the ancient texts of natural history were far from perfect." Paula Findlen, "Natural History," in *The Cambridge History of Science* vol. 3, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: 2006), 441. See also Lynn Thorndyke, "The attack on Pliny," in *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 4 (New York: 1934), 593–620.

10 The *Académie des sciences* was founded in 1666 and published annual proceedings of the research of all of its members.

the years 1702 and 1707 written by authors with a skeptical mentality mention recent cures performed by virtue of music.[11]

In Atheneus,[12] Martianus Capella,[13] and many other ancient writers, we find writings concerning all sorts of prodigious effects that Greek and Roman music produced. Some modern authors, such as Meibomius and Bartholin the Younger, have also collected these facts in their works. One can read about this subject in the collection of many ancient authors who wrote on music, published and commented on by the former; and the book *On Ancient Flutes*, written by Caspar Bartholin. If Le Fèvre of Saumur[14] had been able to see this last book before publishing his commentary on Terence,[15] he might not have inserted those beautiful Latin verses made against the ancient flute, and against those who want to hear him explain its structure and usage.

In reading these books mentioned above, it is good to remind ourselves that music produced such marvellous effects on the Greeks and their neighbours. We know that, in those countries, ears are more highly sensitive than those in countries where it is cold or wet for eight months of the year. Since the heart is usually equally as sensitive as the ears, inhabitants of countries situated on the Aegean and Adriatic seas are naturally more disposed to be impassioned than we are. The Isle de France is not so far from Italy. When in Italy, a Frenchman remarks that beautiful passages in operas are applauded with a rapture that, in France, would appear like the foolishness of madmen.

On the contrary, on our northern border we have neighbours who are by nature less sensitive than we are to the pleasures of listening to music. Judging by the instruments they prefer, and which we can barely stand, whether because of the great noise they make or because they are indecorous and little understood, it must be the case that our neighbours have much tougher ears than we do. Generally speaking, would we find a trumpet concerto performed

---

11 "Sur l'Application des Sons Harmoniques aux Jeux D'Orgues," *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: 1702), 90–92; "Sur les Sisteme Temperes de Musique," *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: 1707), 117–120.

12 Athenaeus of Naucratis (fl. 2nd–3rd centuries AD) was a Greek grammarian and rhetorician. His partly surviving fifteen volume work, *Deipnosophistae*, or *Philosophers/ Sophists at Dinner*, includes writings on music, songs and dance, among many other varied topics. This work was republished in 1597 by the philologist Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) and was a popular read during the Renaissance.

13 Martianus Minneus Felix Capella (fl. ca. 410–420), Latin writer. He is best known for *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* [On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury] a prosimetrum in which he develops the view that there are seven liberal arts.

14 Tanneguy Le Fèvre (1615–1672) was a French scholar of Classics who published many editions of ancient writings. He was a professor at the Academy of Saumur.

15 *Publius Terentius Afer*, published in 1671.

while we are eating a very agreeable sound? Would we like a harpsichord in our bedroom whose effect, instead of entertaining us with the soft sounds of its chords, seems to sound like giant bells? I say 'generally speaking' because, being situated between Italy and the country of which I just spoke, it is natural that we have compatriots like the Italians and others like the northerners.

CHAPTER 4

Of the Art of Poetical Music. Of Melopoeia. That There Was a Melopoeia That Was Not Musical Song, Though It Was Notated.

We have seen from the enumeration and description of the musical arts that poetical music, taken in its full extent, was a single art among the Greeks. However, the Romans distinguished two arts: the art of writing all genres of measured verse and melopoeia, or the art of composing the melody. In Volume One, we discussed at length the rules that the ancients followed in the composition of their verses, so we will not speak here of the first of these arts, namely notated poetry. We will content ourselves with addressing the second of these arts, that of teaching the composition of melody plus singing, or the way to perform melody.

In the part of his book devoted to melopoeia, Aristides Quintilianus says that it taught how to compose melodies and that it had different names, depending on the mode in which they were composed. Depending on the tone, a melopoeia was called the bass, another the middle, and the third the high. *Melopoeia est facultas conficiendi cantum. Hujus alia est hypatoides; alia mesoides; alia netoides, secundum praedictas nobis vocis proprietates* [Bk. 1, p. 28].[1] Unlike us, ancient musical theory did not divide up by octaves. Their *gamut* consisted of eighteen tones, each of which had its own name, as we will need to note below. One of the lowest of these tones was called *hypate* and one of the highest was called *nete*. This is why Aristides calls the low melopoeia, the melopoeia *hypatoides* and the high melopoeia, the melopoeia *netoides*.

Our author after having given some general rules for composition that apply equally to songs that, so to speak, are not sung, that is, to plain declamation, as opposed to musical songs. He then adds, *Differt autem Melopoeïa a Melodia: quod haec sit cantus indicium; illa, habitus effectivus. Modi Melopoeïae genere quidem sunt tres; Dithyrambicus, Nomicus, Tragicus. Quorum Nomicus modus est netoides: Dithyrambicus, mesoides: Tragicus, hypatoides. Specie vero reperiuntur plures, qui ob similitudinem generalibus subjici possunt. Amatorii enim quidam*

1 Meibomius, *Seven Ancient Authors* (see n. 2), Book 1, 28. *Meliopeia* is the ability to make song. Of this one part is the highest (*hypatoides*), another is the middle (*mesoides*), and another the lowest (*netoides*), according to the properties of the voice we discussed earlier.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_099

vocantur, ad quos pertinent Nuptiales; et Comici, et Encomiastici [Bk. 1, p. 29].[2] "Melic composition differs from melody; the latter is a recital of melos and the former is creative habit. The modes of melic composition are three in genus: dithyrambic, nomic, and tragic. The nomic mode is netoid; the dithyrambic, mesoid; and the tragic, hypatoid. But in species, more modes are discovered, which we are able by similarity to group under the generic types. Some are called erotic, among which the bridal songs[3] are distinct; some comic, and some panegyric." Thus, melopoeia was the cause, and melody the effect. Literally, 'melopoeia' means composition of songs of whatever kind and 'melody' means songs set to music. Thus we ought not to be surprised to find the word 'melopoeia' where 'melody' should be written. The name of the cause is substituted for the name of the effect.

In order to begin the explication of this passage from Aristides, let us examine some passages from the Latin book by Martianus Capella concerning literature and music [*On the marriage of Philolog*.].[4] This author was certainly after Aristides Quintilianus, but he lived before Boethius, who cites him. This is enough to make him important to the question at hand. According to Capella, *melos*, the word from which 'melopoeia' and 'melody' are derived, means the connection of high and low notes. *Melos est nexus acutioris et gravioris soni* [*Notes on Aristides*, p. 249].[5] I cite Capella's text corrected on the basis of the opinions of Meibomius. Since plain declamation, as well as song properly speaking, consists in a series of notes lower or higher than the preceding tones, which are artfully arranged, there must be melody in plain declamation as well as in song properly speaking. Consequently, plain declamation is a type of melopoeia which teaches how to effectively create the connection of which Capella speaks, that is, to write good declamation. Let us provide the entire passage that contains the words I have cited. *Melopoeïa est habitus modulationis effectae. Melos autem est actus acuti aut gravioris soni. Modulatio est soni multiplicis melo expressio. Melopoeïae species sunt tres: hypatoïdes, mesoïdes, netoïdes. Hypatoïdes est, quae appellatur tragica, quae per graviores sonos constat; mesoïdes, quae dithyrambica nominatur, quae tonos aequales mediosque custodit; netoïdes, quae et nomica consuevit vocari, quae plures sonos ex ultimis recipit. Sunt etiam aliae distantiae, quae et tropica mela dicuntur, aliae Comiologica; sed haec aptius pro rebus subrogantur, nec sua magis poterunt divisiones*

2 Meibomius, *Seven Ancient Authors*, Book 1, 29–30.

3 An epithalamium is a song that accompanies the progress of a bride to the marriage bed.

4 Martianus Capella, *On the marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 9.

5 Meibomius, "Notes on Aristides," in *Seven Ancient Authors*, 249: "Song is the binding of sharp and heavy sounds."

afferre. Hae autem species etiam tropi dicuntur. Dissentiunt autem melopoeïae ipsae modis pluribus inter se et genere, ut alia sit enarmonios, alia chromatice, alia diatonos; specie quoque, quia alia est hypatoïdes, alia mesoïdes, alia netoïdes; tropis, ut Dorio, Lydio, vel ceteris [See Meibomius, notes, p. 352].[6] "Next in order I shall discuss the styles of melodic composition. Melopoaeia is the effect of completed musical motion. *Melos* is the result of high and low tones. Musical motion is the expression of many tones. There are three styles of melopoeia: *hypatoeides*, *mesoeides*, and *netoeides*. *Hypatoeides*, which is called tragic, consists of deeper tones; *mesoeides*, call dithyrambic, uses equable tones in the middle range; *netoeides*, called nomic, consists largely of tones in the higher range. There are also other varieties which are called erotic, others comic and some that are encomiological. But there more appropriately belong to the previous classifications and cannot claim separate divisions. There styles are also referred to as modes (*tropi*). There are several varieties of melody construction, as follows: in genus, one may be enharmonic, another chromatic, and another diatonic; in style, too, because one is hypatoid, another mesoid; then also in mode; for example, Dorian, Lydian, and others."[7]

After this passage, our author adds some advice on composition. Then, having said everything he has to say about melopoeia, goes on to rhythm.

Returning to Aristides Quintilianus, this is what he adds to what he has already said about melopoeia, before turning to rhythm: *Porro melopoeia inter se differunt Genere, ut Enarmonia, Chromatica, Diatona. Systemate; ut Hypatoides, Mesoides, Netoides. Tono; Dorius, Phrygius, Lydius. Modo; ut Nomico, Dithyrambico, Tragico. More; ut cum dicimus aliam esse Systalticen, per quam tristes animi adfectus novemus; aliam Diastalticen, per quam nimum excitamus; aliam Mediam, per quam ad quietem animum perducimus*.[8] "Melopoiae can be seen as being divided into different types. Some are diatonic, others enharmonic and chromatic. In accordance with the sound of the general system for which they were composed, melopoiae divide into modulation which is high, low, or intermediate. According to the mode, some are Phrygian, others Dorian and Lydian, etc. According to the way the mode is treated, melopoiae are divided into nomic, tragic and dithyrambic. Finally, following the intention of the composer in accordance with the effect that they aim to produce,

6 Meibomius, "*Notae in Martiani Capelli, Librum IX De* Musica" [Notes on Martianus Capella's Book 9 On Music], in *Seven Ancient Authors*, vol. 2, 339–363. The Latin text reproduced here is taken from Martianus Capella's *On the marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 9, § 965–966. The text differs slightly from that given by Du Bos.

7 Martianus Capella, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 9, § 372.

8 Meibomius, *Seven Ancient Authors*, 30. Quotation corrected.

melopoiae are divided into systaltic, which is what brings us to sorrow, into diastaltic, which is what transports our imaginations and animates us, and into intermediate, which is the melopoia that serves as the melody suited to calming our minds by soothing its irritations."

Of all these various divisions of melopoeia, considered in different respects, one rightly draws our attention. This is the division into tragic or bass melopoeia, intermediate or dithyrambic melopoeia, and high or nomic melopoeia, plus, as a consequence, the melodies of three genres of the same type. As Aristides Quintilianus said, and as we have already observed, melopoeia was the cause and melody its effect. Consequently, there must be as many types of melody as there are types of melopoeia.

With this in mind, when we read passages from Aristides and Capella in which melopoeia is divided into nomic, dithyrambic, and tragic, we easily see that not all of their melodies were musical tunes. Many of them were only plain declamation. We see that only dithyrambic melopoeia consisted of songs properly speaking.

In the first place, suppose that some melopoeiae were tragic and songs properly speaking. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that that some of works of the type were only for plain declamation. Panegyrics, a type of melody that bass or tragic melopoeia produced, do not seem to have been genuine musical song. As for songs in ancient comedy, another type of tragic melody, below we shall incontrovertibly prove that, though they were notated, and though the actor who recited them was accompanied, they were basically declamation, even completely declamation. Moreover, I hope to show that the melody in ancient tragedies was not musical song, but rather plain declamation. Perhaps the genre of tragic melopoeia did not include any melopoeiae that amounted to musical song.

In the second place, nomic melody could not be musical song. It was given the name 'nomic' or 'legal' because it was used mainly for the publication of laws: *nomos* meant 'law' in Greek. Besides, the style in which high, or nomic, melopoeia was written was suitable for making the public crier's voice easily understood by everyone when he recited a law.

Bear in mind the touchiness of the Greeks when it came to matters of eloquence and especially how offended they were by poor pronunciation. Then it is easy to imagine that some of their cities were so mindful of their reputations in matters of elegance and polish, that they would not allow the public crier, tasked with proclaiming laws, the freedom to recite them as he would, lest he pronounce sentences and even words in a style that made mockers laugh. These republics believed that pronunciation errors that befell their official would reflect badly on the laws themselves. Consequently, they took the

precaution of writing out the delivery of these laws. They even required that the crier be supported by an accompanist capable of correcting what he left out. They required that the crier proclaim the laws with the same assistant, and even the same assistance, as we have seen was available to actors in the theatre. Martianus Capella wrote, in praising music, that in several cities of Greece, a lyre player accompanied the official who recited the laws. *Quid pacis munia? nonne nostris cantibus celebrata? Graecarum quippe urbium multae ad lyram leges* [*decretaque publica*] *recitabant* [*The marriage of Philolog.*].[9] Of course, the proclaimer and the instrumentalist could not act in concert if the declamation of the proclaimer were extemporized. Clearly, the declamation must be regulated and, consequently, notated. It would not be impossible to find in ancient writers more evidence of the custom of which Capella speaks. For example, Plutarch writes that Philip, King of Macedonia and father of Alexander the Great, wanted, after defeating the Athenians at Chaeronea,[10] to ridicule the law that they had proclaimed against him. On the same battlefield, he then recited the beginning of this law, and recited it with a metred and regulated declamation. Plutarch writes,

> Immediately after his victory, then, Philip waxed insolent for joy, and going forth in revel rout to see the bodies of the slain, and being in his cups, recited the beginning of the decree introduced by Demosthenes, dividing it into feet and marking off the time:
>
> Demosthenes, son of Demosthenes of Paeania, thus moves; but when he got sober and realized the magnitude of the struggle in which he had been involved, he shuddered.
>
> [Life of Demosthenes, ch. 5][11]

Diodorus Siculus[12] wrote that Philip, having drunk too much wine on the day in question, did several indecent things on the battlefield. However, the protests of Demades, an Athenian prisoner of war, made him take control of himself. He

9 Martianus Capella, *The marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 9, § 926: "What about the functions of peace? Are they not filled with our songs? Since many of the Greek cities used to recite the laws and public decrees to the lyre."

10 In the Battle of Chaeronea (333 BC) the Macedonians under Philip II defeated an alliance led by Athens and Thebes and established dominance over most of Greece.

11 Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 20.3.

12 Diodorus Siculus, *Biblioteca historica* [The Library of History] 16.87. Diodorus Siculus (fl. 1st century BC), Greek historian. He was the author of *Bibliotheca historica*, a history of the world.

regretted that he had forgotten himself and this made him more lenient when he came to deal with the defeated enemy.

Certainly Athens, and other Greek cities that had a custom similar to that of the Athenians, did not have their laws sung when they announced them. Here 'sung' is understood in the sense it usually has in our language.

Consider melopoeia when divided by mode. I believe that of the three genres into which melopoeia was so divided, only one, namely dithyrambic, produced musical songs. Moreover, there were some types of tragic melodies that were songs properly speaking. The other so-called melodies were only written and notated declamations.

Since my opinion is new in the Republic of Letters,[13] I must omit nothing in order to show that, at least, I am not completely wrong in advancing it. Thus, I will present passages from Greek and Latin authors who, in speaking of music from time to time, have said things that prove, if it is permitted to use this expression, the existence of melody that was only plain declamation. Before this, I ask the reader's approval of my transcribing here some passages of those ancient writers who have treated their music theoretically. These will prove this existence.

Wallis[14] is the Englishman so famous for his knowledge and for having been the man of letters of our time who has lived the longest. In 1699 he published, in the third volume of his mathematical works, Porphyry's Greek *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* together with a Latin translation. It shows that ancient music first divided the operations of the voice into two types: *Proximo statim loco exhibent, ipsas vocis differentias. Duplex enim, ait, est hujusce motus: Continuus qui dicitur, et Diastematicus. Continuus quidem, quo inter nos colloquimur; qui et eodem sensu Sermocinalis dictur. Diastematicus vero, quo canimus et modulamur, tibiaque et cithara ludimus; unde et Melodicus dicitur* [Porphyry's *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics*, ch. 1, p. 194].[15] The author subsequently addresses the differences between the sounds of the voice. "For they say that its movement is of two sorts, one called 'continuous,' the other 'intervallic.' The continuous kind is that through which we converse with one another; hence it

13 At the end of the 16th century, the Florentine Camerata adopted the view that Greek tragedies were sung. In the 17th century, it was still widely believed that operas, in which all of the words were sung, reflected the practices of ancient Greek tragedy.

14 John Wallis (1616–1703), English mathematician, cartographer, theologian, and musicologist. He is best known today as a contributor to the development of calculus. Du Bos refers below to *Operum mathematicorum volumen tertium* [Works of the Mathematicians, volume three] (Oxford: 1699).

15 Porphyry, *Porphyrii in Ptolemaei harmonica commentarius* [Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics] 1.1 (10D). Translation follows the quotation.

is also, equivalently, called 'proper to speech.' The intervallic sort is that through which we sing and make melody or play the pipes and the kithara; hence it is also named 'melodic.'" Porphyry subsequently explains at some length the difference between the two types of sounds. He then adds, "This is the principle that Ptolemy established at the beginning of his reflections on harmony. It is also the principle taught, generally speaking, by the adherents of Aristoxenus." *Cum igitur ab Aristoxeneis prope omnibus haec tradantur, statim ab initio tractationis de Harmonica Ptolemaeus eadem postulat.*[16] We have already explained who Aristoxenus was. Thus, this distinction between the continuous sound of singing and melodic sound or divided sound, was added in order to the voice follow regular intervals as it progresses. This was one of the first principles of the science of music. Soon we shall see that melodic sound, or melody, was divided into two types: melody that was song properly speaking, and plain declamation. Martianus Capella wrote that, "Let us now deal with the voice as the parent of all sound, so to speak. All voice production is divided into two categories: continuous and discrete. The continuous is found in flowing conversation; the discrete is used in music. There is an intermediate form, having elements of both; for it neither adheres strictly to the continuous variation of the one nor is discretely varied in modulation like the other. It is the form which is used in the recitation of all poetry."[17] For, as we will say below, *carmen* properly refers to notated declamation of verses that are not sung, taking the word 'to sing' to have the meaning it has for us. *Nunc de prima voce velut de sonitus totius parente dicemus. Omnis vox in duo genera dividitur: continuum atque divisum. Continuum est velut juge colloquium, divisum, quod in modulatione servamus. Est et medium, quod inter utrumque permixtum acneque alterius continuum modum servat nec alterius frequenti divisione praeceditur, ut pronuntiandi modo carmina cuncta recitantur* [See the notes to Meib.].[18]

Our declamation is mid-way musical song and the plain pronunciation of normal conversation. It could not be described better than by Capella's term 'intermediate sound.'

I do not believe that I can be blamed for having here restricted the meaning of the term 'modulation' to musical song, while I have elsewhere given it a much broader meaning, namely all forms of notated poetry. It is obvious, from the distinction that Capella draws between *modulation* and *carmen* that he intends to use the term 'modulation' in the sense I have given it here. He intended this word to mean musical song, properly speaking.

16 Porphyry, *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* 195.

17 Martianus Capella, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* 9, § 937.

18 Meibomius, *Seven Ancient Authors* 352.

Bryennios[19] informs us about how this intermediate sound, or declamation, was written. This Greek author is one of those whom Wallis includes, together with a Latin translation, in Volume Three of his mathematical works. This is what Bryennios writes: "There are two types of song or melody. One is used in ordinary conversation and the other is musical song. The song found in ordinary conversation is notated with stresses, since the voice, in speaking, naturally rises and falls. As for song properly speaking, that is the concern of musical harmony, it has fixed intervals. It is composed of notes and intervals. Diatonic music, chromatic music, and enharmonic music have rules for these intervals." *Est autem melos* (*cantus*) *aliud Sermocinale, aliud Musicum. Sermocinale enim est illud quod componitur ex Vocum profodiis:* (*natural enim est vocem inter loquendum intendere et remittere*). *Musicum autem melos, de quo agit harmonica, est diastematicum illud ex Phthogis et Diatematis compositum* [Bk. 3, ch. 10, *On Melopaeïa*].[20]

It would be pointless to tell the reader here that, in declamation, successive sounds can differ in pitch by the smallest intervals that sounds permit. This is not true of music. Enharmonic music only admits of quarter notes.

The passage I have just cited from Bryennios does not merely indicate that melopoeia is only plain declamation. It also shows us how it could be notated. Before we discuss this matter, it would not be amiss to cite a passage from Boethius since it clearly states that declamation as well as musical song was notated. "Ancient musicians, for the sake of abbreviation—lest it always be necessary to write out complete names of notes—devised certain written symbols whereby the designations of the strings might be notated, and they distributed them throughout the genera and the modes. At the same time, using such abbreviations, they were striving to reach the point where a musician who wanted to write down some melody over a verse, set out in the rhythmic structure of some metre, could add these written symbols for the sounds. Through this remarkable means, then, they discovered that not only the words of songs—conveyed through letters—but also the very melodies themselves—expressed in these written symbols—could be preserved in the memory and for posterity." *Veteres enim musici propter compendium scriptionis, ne integra semper nomina necesse esset apponere, excogitavere notulas quasdam quibus nervorum vocabula notarentur, easque per genera modosque divisere, simul etiam*

19 Manuel Bryennios (ca. 1275–1340), Byzantine mathematician, astronomer, and musicologist. He is the author of *Harmonika*, a work on Byzantine music that draws on Ptolemy and other ancient authors.

20 Bryennios, in John Wallis' *On the Works of the Mathematicians* 502. Quotation corrected. Du Bos provides translation of the passage before the quotation.

hac brevitate captantes, ut si quando melos aliquod musicus voluisset ascribere, super versum rhythmica metri compositione distentum, has sonorum notulas ascriberet, ita miro modo reperientes, ut non tantum carminum verba, quae litteris explicarentur, sed melos quoque ipsum, quod his notulis signaretur, in memoriam posteritatemque duraret [*On Music*. 4].[21]

Boethius here praises musicians of earlier times for two inventions. The first was writing the type of song called *carmen*. It was, as we shall see, plain declamation. The second was writing songs of every type, including musical song, of which Boethius goes on to give the notes following the passage just quoted. Thus, declamation was notated as well as musical song. Judging from the account Boethius gives, the ancients discovered the art of notating plain declamation before they discovered the art of notating music. As we shall see, the first was easier than the other. This leads us to believe that of two arts with approximately the same objective, the one easier to practice will have been discovered first. Let us now see the manner in which declamation was notated and the manner in which song properly speaking was. We will then better understand this passage from Boethius.

According to Bryennios, declamation was written with accents. Consequently, in order to notate it, it was necessary to use the symbols used to indicate accents. The ancients had eight or ten accents and as many different symbols to indicate them.

Sergius, an ancient Latin grammarian, counted eight accents. He defines them as signs for an inflection of voice and calls them aids to singing. *Tenores sive accentus dicti sunt, qui naturalem unius cuiusque sermonis in vocem nostrae elationis servent tenorem. Dictus autem accentus est quasi ad cantus*. […] *Sunt autem omnes accentus Latini octo* [Commentary on Donatus, *Ars grammatica*].[22]

Priscian, another Latin grammarian, who lived at the end of the 5th century, wrote, in his book on accents, that the accent is the law. It is the fixed rule that teaches how one must raise or lower one's voice in pronouncing each syllable. *Accentus itaque est certa lex et regula ad elevandam et deprimendam syllabam uniuscuiusque particulae orationis* [Fol. 133. verso].[23] This author subsequently

21 Boethius, *On the Art of Music* 4.3.1.

22 Donatus, *Art of Grammar* 4.482: "Tones or accents have been called that which maintain a natural tone of every speech in the voice of our delivery. Moreover, accent has been discussed as if almost singing. There are eight Latin accents." Sergius or, as he is sometimes called, Pseudo-Cassiodorus, may be Maurus Servius Honoratus (late-4th or early-5th century AD), Latin grammarian. A commentary on the *Ars grammatica* of Aelius Donatus (fl. mid-4th century AD) is attributed to 'Sergius.'

23 The edition to which Du Bos refers is uncertain. He quotes *De Accentibus* [On Accents]

says that Latin has ten accents and, at the same time, gives the name of each accent and the sign used to indicate it. *Sunt autem accentus decem, quos huic ita operi praenotare dignum esse existimavi pernoare*.[24] Their names are: *acutus, gravis, circumflexus, longa linea, brevis, hyphen, diastole, apostrophos, dusaea, psyle*. The book I have just cited has the sign for each accent. Isidore of Seville says the same thing [Isid. *Etym*. Bk. 1, ch. 19].[25]

Originally the Latins [Quint. *Instit*. Bk. 1, ch. 9][26] had only three accents: acute, grave, and circumflex. Others were only discovered subsequently and possibly some newly invented accents were not widely adopted. Consequently, we should not be surprised that some grammarians identified only eight while others held the number to be ten. But these authors agreed about their use. Isidore of Seville wrote, in his *Etymologies*, that accents were called *tones* or *tenors* because they marked an increase in the volume of the voice or a rest. *Latini autem habent et alia nomina. Nam accentus et tonos et tenores dicunt, quia ibi sonus crescit et desinit* [Isid. *Etym*. Bk. 1, ch. 18].[27]

Unfortunately, we do not have the work in which Priscian set aside space to address at length all of the uses to which accents could be put. *Sed nos locuturi de partibus ad accentum qui in partibus vel dictionibus est necessarius transeamus*.[28] This work that we do not have, either because it was never written or was lost, apparently would have taught us the use that writers of declamation made of accents. What Isidore wrote in *Etymologies* about the ten Roman accents is no substitute for Priscian's lost treatise.

I imagine that a writer of declamation only put a mark on syllables that, according to the rules of grammar, must have accents, acute, grave, or circumflex, as appropriate. With regard to expression, the writer placed other accents on the unmarked syllables to indicate the emphasis that he thought appro-

---

1.2 "For accent is the absolute law for raising and lowering the syllables of each and every part of speech." Priscianus Caesariensis, known in English as Priscian, (fl. 500), Latin grammarian. His *Institutes of Grammar* was the standard Latin textbook throughout the Middle Ages. Du Bos frequently refers to passages from the first chapter *On Accents*.

24 Priscian, *On Accents* 1.2. The text that immediately precedes this quotation is a close paraphrase of this passage.

25 St. Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636), scholar, Church Father, and bishop of Seville. His *Etymologiae* [Etymologies] was a compendium of ancient knowledge. This work is also known as *Origines* [Origins].

26 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.5.

27 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 1.18. The text that immediately precedes this quotation is a close paraphrase of this passage.

28 Priscian, On Accents 1.2: "But let us, who are about to discuss the parts for accenting which is necessary in parts or words, pass over this."

priate to give them, given the sense of the passage. What could these accents indicate, if not various risings and lowerings of the voice? Approximately the same use was made of these accents as today's Jews make of their musical accents when singing the psalms in their style or, more accurately, declaiming them.

There is no declamation whatsoever that cannot be notated with ten distinct characters, each of which indicates a particular vocal inflection. The intonation of these accents was learned when one learned to read, so almost everyone understood this sort of notation. On this supposition, nothing was easier than understanding the technique of writing and performing ancient declamation. St. Augustine was right to say that he would not discuss them, since the meanest actor knew them. The rhythm was, so to speak, inherent in the line. The writer only needed to add the accents and prescribe the tempo of the rhythm, after having provided the instrumental accompanist with a very simple and easy to perform part.

As for melody, or song properly speaking, we know precisely how it was written. The general system or, as Boethius calls it, constitution of ancient music, was divided, following Martianus Capella [*On the Marriage of Philolog.*],[29] into eighteen notes, each of which had its own name. There is no need to explain here that some of these notes could be, *au fond*, the same. One was called *prostambemenos*, etc. In order, as Boethius writes, to avoid writing the name of each note above the words throughout, which was impractical, symbols or types of signs were invented to indicate each note. These figures were called *semeia* or *signs*. The word *semeia* means all sorts of signs in general, but it was specifically used as the name of the notes or signs at issue here. All of these signs consisted of a monogram formed from the first letter of the particular name of each of the eighteen tones of the general system. Though some of these eighteen initial letters were the same, they were designed in such a way that they formed monograms which could not be mistaken for each other. Boethius provides the shape of these monograms.

Isaac Vossius identifies, in the book of which we have already spoken [*De Poem. Cant.*, p. 90],[30] several ancient works that show how, in their times,

29 Martianus Capella, *On the Marriage of Mercury and Philology* 9, § 931: "Tone (*tonus*) and sound (*sonus*) are generally interchangeable terms. In each and every mode there are 18 tones. The first of these is called the *proslambanomenos* in Greek; the Romans call it the *adquisitus*."

30 Isaac Vossius (1618–1689), Dutch scholar and bibliophile, was the author of *De Poematum cantu et viribus rythmi* [On poems that are sung with strong rhythm] (London: 1673), an early musicological work.

musical songs were notated. Meibomius also speaks of this matter in various passages of his collection of ancient authors who wrote on music. He does so mainly in his Preface, where he gives the melody of the *Te Deum* in ancient tablature and modern notation. Thus, I will content myself with saying that the signs, the *semeia*, which were used in vocal music as well as instrumental music, were written above the words. They were arranged on two lines. The top line was for the sung words and the lower line was for the accompaniment. These lines were barely thicker than ordinary lines of writing. We even have some Greek manuscripts in which these two types of notes are written in the manner I have described. From these manuscripts we have taken hymns to Calliope, Nemesis, and Apollo as well as a stanza from the odes of Pindar that Burette gives us in ancient and modern notation [*Hist. of the Acad. Of Belles Lettres*, vol. 5, p. 162 from *Mem.*].[31]

The signs invented by the ancients to notate musical songs were used until the 11th century. At that time, Guido of Arezzo[32] invented the notation that is used today, with notes placed on different lines in such a way that the position of the note indicates its pitch. At first, these notes were only dots with nothing to indicate their durations. However, the Paris-born Johannes de Muris, who lived during the reign of King John [In 1530],[33] discovered a means of giving these dots different durations by various figures: whole notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and others that he invented. These have been adopted by all European musicians. Thus the contemporary art of writing music is due to France as well as to Italy.

It thus follows from what I have said that there were three types of melopoeia. One, namely dithyrambic or *mesoides*, were musical songs. The other two, namely the tragic, generally speaking, and the nomic, were forms of declamation.

I will not here discuss dithyrambic melody, though it is much closer than plain declamation to music of the present day. I have nothing to add to what has been written by a learned man [Burette of the *Academie royale des* [*in-*

31 Pierre-Jean Burette, "Dissertation sur la melopée de l'ancienne musique," [Dissertation on melopoeia in ancient music] *Histoire de l'Academie royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 5 (1729), 2. The correct page numbers are 169–199.

32 Guido of Arezzo (ca. 991–after 1033), Italian monk and musical theorist credited with the invention of staff notation that succeeded the use of neumes. His book, *Micrologus* (ca. 1026), was widely read in the Middle Ages.

33 Johannes de Muris, also known as John of Murs (ca. 1290–ca. 1355), French clergyman, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, and music theorist. He wrote several books on music theory.

scriptions et] *belles lettres*, vol. 5 of the *Histoire* of this Academy][34] who has addressed this subject.

As for the melody that was only a notated declamation, I have nothing to say concerning the nomic or legal, besides what I have said. I am going to speak of tragic melody more particularly, even at some length. I will confirm what I have already written concerning its existence by facts that are indubitable, though the theatrical melody of the ancients was composed and notated, it was nevertheless not song properly speaking. We had a mistaken notion of theatrical melody, and believed it to be a musical song, and we had not grasped that *saltation* was not dance as we understand it, but only ordinary acting. Consequently, commentators have badly elucidated ancient writers who speak about their theatre. So, I cannot give too many proofs of a new opinion concerning tragic melopoeia and tragic melody. I will do the same with regard to my opinion about ancient saltation when I come to discuss hypocritical music. It is also a completely new opinion.

34 Burette, "Dissertation on melopoeia in ancient music."

CHAPTER 5

Explanation of Several Passages from Aristotle's *Poetics*, Chapter 6. On the Chanting of Latin Verses or *Carmen*.

I think that the best way to confirm what I have already said about melopoeia and ancient tragic melody is to show that, according to my opinion, it is easy to understand one of the most important passages in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which commentators have until now rendered nearly unintelligible. Nothing proves the truth of a principle better than to see its application clarify very obscure passages. The following passage is the Latin translation by Daniel Heinsius, in which I have changed two words to make it conform better to the text. *Tragedia ergo est absolutae et quae justam magnitudem habeat actionis, imitatio, sermone constans ad voluptatem facto, ita ut singula genera in singulis partibus habeant locum, utque non enarrando, sed per misericordiam et metum similium perturbationem inducat. Per sermonem autem factum ad voluptatem, eum intelligo qui rithmo constat, harmonia et metro. Addidi autem ut singula genera seorsim … quia nonnulla metris solummodo, nonnulla vero melodia perficiantur. Quoniam vero agendo in ea imitantur, primo omnium necesse erit partem aliquam tragediae esse ornatum externum: at interim melopaeiam et dictionem, his enim in tragedia imitantur. Dictionem jam dico ipsam metrorum compositionem: melopaeiam vero cujus vim satis omnes intelligunt* [Chapter 6].[1] "Tragedy is the imitation of a complete and extensive action. This imitation is made without

1 Aristotle, *Poetics* (*Aristotelis De Poetica*) 6, ed. Daniel Heinsius (Amsterdam: 1611), 11.1449b24–35. Here is the contemporary English translation from a modern critical edition: "A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. Here by 'language with pleasurable accessories' I mean that with rhythm and harmony; and by 'the kinds separately' I mean that some portions are worked out with verse only, and others in turn with song. As they act the stories, it follows that in the first place the spectacle must be some part of the whole; and in the second melody and diction, these being the means of their imitation. Here by diction I mean merely this, the composition of the verses; and by melody, what is too completely understood to require explanation." (trans. Ingram Bywater, "Poetics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes; this translation is based on the edition by Rudolph Kassel, *Aristotelis De Arte Poetica*, (Oxford Classical Texts) (Oxford: 1965)). Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), professor at the University of Leiden during the Dutch Renaissance, working

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_100

the help of narration and in a language designed to please, but in which diverse pleasures emanate from different sources. Tragedy puts before our eyes objects which it tries to use to excite fear and pity, sentiments so appropriate for purging the passions. By 'language designed to please' I mean phrases reduced and divided by tempo, spoken to a rhythm, and which have harmony. I say that diverse pleasures of the language of tragedies emanate from different sources, because there are beauties that result only from metre, others from melody. Since tragic imitation takes place in a theatre, we must also join foreign elements to the diction and melody. We easily see that I mean by 'diction' the verses themselves. With regard to melody, everyone knows its power."

Let us examine the origin of these 'beauties of language designed to please,' which he mentions here; and we find that they are not the work of one, but of many musical arts. Consequently, it is not so difficult to understand the point of this passage that says that they emanate from difference sources. Let us begin with metre and rhythm, which language designed to please should have.

We know that the ancients did not have dramatic works written in prose; they were all written in verse. In saying that diction should be divided into metres, Aristotle meant that the metre that governs the art of poetry should be used as the metre in declamation is used. Regarding rhythm, the feet of the verses serve to regulate the metre's tempo during the recitation of the verses. It is also for this reason that Aristotle said in *Poetics* 4 that metres are portions of rhythm, that is to say, the metre that results from the form of the verse[2] should regulate the tempo during recitation.[3] Everyone knows that the ancients often used verses of different forms in their dramatic works. The person who beat the metre on stage had to mark the time in the declamation, in accordance with the form of verse recited, speeding up or slowing down the metre's tempo according to the meaning of the verses. This was in accordance with the principles taught by the art of rhythm. Thus, Aristotle had reason to say that the beauty of

---

with some of the most famous neo-scholastic scholars. On Heinsius' scholarship, see Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Daniel Heinsius* (Boston: 1978).

2 Metre is the structure of a line of poetic verse that defines its rhythm. It regulates rhythm by assigning stressed syllables, in combination with the sequence of long and short vowels. The metre is thereby controlled by a series of 'feet.' The 'version' referred to here has to do with the classification of feet. For example, the version of foot known as 'spondee' contains two syllables, both stressed; the version 'dactyl' contains three syllables, the first stressed, the second and third unstressed.

3 Aristotle, *Poetics* 4.1449a23–27: "As soon, however, as a spoke part came in, the very nature of the thing found the appropriate metre. The iambic, we know, is the most speakable of metres, as is shown by the fact that we very often fall into it in conversation, whereas we rarely talk in hexametres, and only when we depart from the speaking tone of voice."

rhythm does not originate from the same cause that produces the beauties of harmony and melopoeia. The poet's choice of feet, chosen in accordance with the topic expressed in these verses, is what gives rise to the beauty or agreeableness of metre and, as a result, that of rhythm.

Consider harmony. As we will soon see, ancient actors were accompanied by some sort of instrument during declamation. Since harmony grows out of the combination of sounds from different sources, the melopoeia they recite, and the basso continuo[4] that sustains them, must go well together. But it was neither musical metre nor rhythm that taught knowledge of chords. Rather, it was musical harmony. This is why our author had reason to say that harmony, one of the beauties of language designed to please, did not issue from the same sources as the beauty resulting from diction. The beauty resulting from diction comes from the principles of poetic art, such as those of the art of metre and rhythm. But the beauty resulting from harmony proceeds from the principles of musical harmony. The beauties of melody issue from a particular source: I would say, from the choice of accents, or sounds suited to words, and suitable for this reason for moving the audience. These are thus the different sources from which come the beauties of language designed to please. Aristotle had good reason to say that these beauties are born separately, and, if I can put it this way, in different cradles.

In other passages in *Poetics* 6, Aristotle provides the clearest explanation that we have read. A few lines after the passage in question, our author writes, *Quare omnis tragedie partes esse sex necesse est, quae ad qualitatem faciunt illius. Hae sunt autem, fabula, mores, dictio, sententie, melopoeia et apparatus*.[5] "Six things are needed to make a tragedy, namely, story or action, customs, maxims, diction, melopoeia, and the stage apparatus." Here Aristotle substitutes the cause for the effect, saying 'melopoeia' in place of 'melody.' At the end of this chapter, our author says the same thing again, after having comprehensively discussed the plot, customs, maxims, diction, and melody of tragedy: "Of these five parts, melopoeia has the greatest effect. The apparatus of the performance also makes an imposing spectacle; but it is never so difficult to be successful than in composition. Moreover, tragedy has its own essence and value independently of the actors and the theatre." *Harum vero quinque partium maxime oblectat*

4 'Basso continuo' means 'continuous bass.' This refers to the accompaniment by a bass instrument, such as a cello or bassoon, often together with a harpsichord or another chordal instrument, of a solo instrument or singer(s) during baroque and early modern musical performances.

5 Aristotle, *Poetics* 12.1450a8–10: "There are six parts consequently of every tragedy, that make it the sort of tragedy it is, viz. a plot, characters, diction, thought, spectacle and melody".

melopoeia. Apparatus autem animum oblectat quidem, minimum tamen artis habet. Tragediae quippe natura et virtus etiam extra certamen et sine histrionibus consistit.[6] Aristotle adds to this: *Praeterea in apparatu concinnando potius artificis qui eum conficit quam industria versatur*.[7] "Beyond what I said, the set is more a matter for the set designer than for the poet."

The author is tasked, like the orator, with inventing the plot or the action of his work and, like the philosopher, with giving agreeable manners and personalities to his characters, and making them produce good maxims. In the capacity of poet, the author is charged with making well-metred verses, prescribing faster or slower tempi, and with composing the melody on which the success of the tragedy largely depends. To be surprised at what Aristotle said about the importance of melopoeia means that one has never seen a tragedy performed. To be shocked that he tasks the poet with composing the melody, one must have forgotten what I have said and promised to prove, as I will do below: that Greek poets themselves notated the declamation of their works, unlike Roman poets, who delegated this work to artists who, being neither authors nor actors, made a career out of putting dramatic works on stage. We have also observed that it was for that reason that Porphyry only identified a single art of composing verses *and* melody, which he called "the poetic art taken in all its breadth," because he observed the practice of the Greeks. In his inventory of musical arts, Aristides Quintilianus, on the other hand, saw the practice of the Romans. He thus included the art of composing verses and the art of composing melody as two distinct arts.

In his remarks on Chapter 6, here is what one of the last commentators on this work wrote on the subject of Aristotle's *Poetics*, that we have been explaining: "If tragedy can exist without poetry, it can exist to an even greater extent without music. We must admit that we do not understand how music could ever have been considered a big part of tragedy, since nothing in the world seems more foreign and contrary to tragic action than singing. However unpleasant it may seem to the inventors of musical tragedies, we could not suffer these works, as ridiculous as they are new, had we the least taste for theatrical works, or were we not enchanted and seduced by one of the greatest

6 Ibid., 15.1450b15–18: "As for the two remaining parts, the melody is the greatest of the pleasurable accessories of tragedy. The spectacle, though an attraction, is the least artistic of all the parts, and has least to do with the art of poetry". Note that Heinsius' edition has '*modulatio*' in place of Du Bos' '*melopoeia*.'

7 Ibid., 15.1450b20–21: "and besides, the getting-up of the spectacle is more a matter for the designer than the poet."

musicians who ever lived.[8] Operas are, I dare say, poetic disasters, all the more unbearable since people try to pass them off as ordinary works. Aristotle would have done us a favour if he had explained how music could be considered necessary to tragedy. Instead, he was content simply to say, 'that all of its power is known.' This only indicates that everyone was convinced that it was necessary and that they felt the extraordinary power that singing brought to these poems. I have often tried to understand the reasons that required men as able and sensitive as the Athenians to combine music and dance with tragic actions. After much research to discover how it seemed natural and *vraisemblable* to them that a chorus that represents the spectators of an action dance and sing about these touching and extraordinary events, I concluded that they acted in accordance with their nature and as required by their superstitions. The Greeks were the most superstitious people in the world and the most given to dance and music, and their education strengthened this natural inclination" [Dacier, *Poet. of Arist*. p. 87].[9]

---

8 An apparent reference to Lully.

9 André Dacier, *La Poetique d'Aristote, contenant les regles les plus exactes pour juger du poëme heroïque, et des pieces du theatre, la tragedie et la comedie; traduite en François, avec des remarques critiques sur tout l'ouvrage* [Aristotle's Poetics, containing the most precise rules for judging heroic poetry and theatrical works, tragedy and comedy; translated into French, with critical notes on the entire work] (Paris: 1692), 87: "*Si la tragédie peut subsister sans vers, elle le peut encore plus sans musique. Il faut même avouer que nous ne comprenons pas bien comment la musique a pu jamais être considérée comme faisant en quelque sorte partie de la tragédie: car s'il y a rien au monde qui paroisse étranger et contraire même à une action tragique, c'est le chant. N'en déplaise aux inventeurs des tragédies en musique, poëmes aussi ridicules que nouveaux, et qu'on ne pourroit souffrir, si l'on avoit le moindre gout pour les piéces de théâtre, ou que l'on n'eût pas été enchanté et séduit par un des plus grands musiciens qui ayent jamais été. Car les opéra sont, si je l'ose dire, les grotesques de la poësie; d'autant plus insupportables, qu'on prétend les faire passer pour des ouvrages réguliers. Aristote nous auroit donc bien obligé de nous marquer comment la musique a pu être jugée nécessaire à la tragédie. Au lieu de cela, il s'est contenté de dire simplement, 'que toute sa force étoit connue': ce qui marque seulement que tout le monde étoit convaincu de cette nécessité, et sentoit les effets merveilleux que le chant produisoit dans ces poëmes, dont il n'occupoit que les intermedes. J'ai souvent tâché de comprendre les raisons qui obligeoient des hommes aussi habiles et aussi délicats que les Athéniens, d'associer la musique et la danse aux actions tragiques; et après bien des recherches pour découvrir comment il leur avoit paru naturel et vraisemblable qu'un choeur qui représentoit les spectateurs d'une action dansât et chantât sur des événemens si touchans et si extraordinaires, j'ai trouvé qu'ils avoient suivi en cela leur naturel, et cherché à contenter leur superstition. Les Grecs étoient les hommes du monde les plus superstitieux et les plus portés à danse et à la musique, et l'éducation fortisioit cette inclination naturelle*."

André Dacier (1651–1722) was a classical scholar and textual editor. He was a student of Tanneguy Le Fèvre at the Academy of Saumur. Dacier's *La Poetique d'Aristote* was translated into English in 1705 where it enjoyed a sizeable readership, which included the English poet

I seriously doubt that this reasoning excused the Athenians' taste. It is based on the supposition that the music and dance spoken of by ancient authors, considered as necessary elements in tragic performances, were the same kind of music and dance as our own. But, as we have already seen, this music was only a plain declamation, and this dancing, as we will see, was just a regulated gesture. It is not the Athenians who need to be forgiven here.

True, Dacier is not the only one to be mistaken on this point; his predecessors were just as mistaken. I would say the same about the Abbé Gravina who, having supposed that melopoeia in these theatrical works was a musical song, and the *saltation* a dance like ours, advanced a description of ancient theatre in his book *On Ancient Tragedy* that no one can understand [Printed in 1715].[10]

True, in *Poetics* 26 Aristotle calls 'music' what he called 'melopoeia' in *Poetics* 6. *Neque parvus praeterea tragedia ex musica et apparatu cumulus accedit, quibus validissime conciliatur voluptas*. "Tragedy takes no small advantage of music and the performative apparatus, which generate so much pleasure" [*Poet*. ch. 26].[11] But this is because the art of composing this melody, which should govern the whole piece and be no less essential than customs, was one of the musical arts.

In another work, this author asks himself, "Why do choruses in tragedy sing neither in Hypodorian nor in Hypophrygian? Instead, they often help themselves to these two modes in the roles of the characters, especially at the ends of scenes when people should be in a state of excessive passion" [*Prob*. 19. Bk. 49].[12] He responds to this question: "These two modes are meant for the expression of passions possessed by men of great courage, or of heroes who

---

John Dryden (1631–1700). On Dacier's influence, see Alexander Clark, *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England (1660–1830)* (Paris: 1925), 286–288.

10 Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664–1718), Italian writer and lawyer. His *Della Tragedia* [On Tragedy] was published in 1715 in Naples. "Gravina was of Naples. He was thought the most learned man of his age, and is still considered as the greatest critick, next *Castelvetro*, that Italy has produced. Every one of his works is full of erudition and thinking; but I could never adopt many of his opinions and criticisms on poetry, it seeming to me that he had no regard for any poetical performance that did not square with the rules of Aristotle. Should any body weigh, for instance, Shakespeare in the Aristotelian scales, he would find him much defective; yet, was not Shakespeare at least as great a tragick as any Grecian?" Giuseppe Baretti, *The Italian Library containing an account of the lives and works of the most valuable authors of Italy* (London: 1767), 308.

11 Aristotle, *Poetics* 26. The translation follows the Latin text.

12 Aristotle, *Problems* 19, q. 48. Du Bos' Latin text, from which he has made a French translation, differs considerably from Aristotle's Greek text. We have translated from Du Bos' text directly.

usually lead men in tragedies, rather than the actors who comprise the chorus, who are supposed to be regular people whose passions should not have the same character as those of the heroes on stage. In the second place," Aristotle continues, "just as actors in the chorus do not take part in the play's action to the same extent as the leading actors, it follows that the chant of the chorus should be less animated and more melodious than that of the main actors. This is why," Aristotle concludes, "the chorus does not chant in either the Hypodorian or Hypophrygian modes."

In Brossard's *Dictionary of Music*, the reader can find an explanation of ancient musical modes. We cannot say more clearly what Aristotle said in the last passage quoted, that a notated melody should be added to everything recited in theatre. Ancient actors were not free, unlike ours, to pronounce their characters' verses with whatever tone, inflexion, or vocal style that they judged appropriate.

It is not really certain whether Aristotle himself wrote *Problems* with his own hand.[13] We must entertain the idea that this work was written by his students. Aristotle was always regarded as one of the great pillars of antiquity, and the work was written when Greek and Roman theatres were still open.

Since the tones with which people declaim are different from one another, just as the tones in which we compose our music differ, notated declamation needs to be made in different modes. There should be modes that serve better than other modes for expressing certain passions, just as there are modes in our music more appropriate than others for achieving good expression.

What the Greeks called 'tragic melody' the Romans sometimes called '*carmen*.' Ovid, who was a Latin poet and who, consequently, did not compose the declamation in his dramatic works himself, said in one and the same phrase and in speaking of one of his works that was successfully performed on stage: "Our *carmen* and my verses."

> *Carmina* [*quod*] *pleno saltari nostra theatro*
> *Versibus et plaudi scribis, amice, meis*.
> [Ovid. *Trist*. Bk. 5, eleg. 7][14]

13 Although *Problems* is published in the modern collection of Aristotle's writings, most would agree that its authorship is in doubt, even if it did emerge from Aristotle's school or students at some stage. See Edward Seymour Forster, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*: their nature and composition," *The Classical Quarterly* 22.3/4 (1928), 163–165.

14 Ovid, *Tristia* 5.7.25–26: "As for your news that my songs are being presented with dancing in a crowded theatre, my friend, and that my verses are applauded."

Ovid said "our *carmina*" because only the rhythm and metre belonged to him. The melody of the declamation belonged to someone else. But Ovid said "my verses," *meos versus*, because the thoughts and the expression, in other words, the verses as considered on paper, were entirely his own.

A passage from Quintilian, the most authoritative author we can cite on this matter, definitively proves that, aside from the verses, a *carmen* involved something written over top of the verses in order to prescribe the vocal inflections required for reciting it. He clearly states that the ancient verses of the Salian priests had a *carmen*. Here are his words: *Versus quoque Saliorum habent carmen, quae cum omnia sint a Rege Numa instituta, faciunt manifestum ne illis quidem qui rudes ac bellicosi videntur, curam Musices quantam illa recipiebat aetas, defuisse* [*Inst*. Bk. 1, ch. 11].[15] The verses of the Salian priests had their own chant; and since their very foundation came from King Numa, this chant showed that the Romans, as ferocious as they were, nonetheless already had knowledge of music. How could this music be transmitted from the time of Numa to Quintilian's day if it were not written in notes? On the other hand, if it were a musical chant, why did Quintilian call it a *carmen*? Let us ignore the fact that our contemporaries always give, albeit incorrectly, the name '*carmen*' to verses that are not sung, where the declamation is free and which the ancients called a 'reading.' The person responsible for reading them was only required to follow the tempo, and he could make whatever vocal inflections he judged appropriate. To name a contemporary of Quintilian, Juvenal said to one of his friends that he had invited to dinner, that during the meal they would read some of the most beautiful passages from the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*. Juvenal added that whoever reads is not required to be a brilliant reader. That did not matter: the verses always bring great pleasure.

> *Conditor Iliados cantabitur, atque Maronis*
> *Altisoni dubiam facientia carmina palmam.*
> *Quid refert tales versus qua voce legantur.*
> [Juv. *Sat*. 12][16]

15 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.20–21: "Even the hymns of the Salii have a tune. And as all this was introduced by King Numa, it is obvious that even our rude and warlike ancestors did not neglect music, in so far as that age allowed." The twelve Salian priests of Mars, who were also known as 'leaping priests,' dressed as ancient warriors. Annually they walked around Rome while dancing and singing the *Carmen Saliare*, a hymn.

16 Juvenal, *Satires* 11.180–182: "We'll have a recitation from the author of the *Iliad* and from the poems of sublime Maro which challenge Homer's supremacy. With poetry like this, it hardly matters how it is read." Maro is a reference to Virgil.

In another place, Juvenal called '*carmina*' the simple recitation of the hexametric verse of Statius' *Thebaid*,[17] which Statius himself read and spoke aloud as he wished.

> *Curritur ad vocem jucundam et carmen amicae*
> *Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem,*
> *Promisitque diem; tanta dulcedine captos*
> *Afficit ille animos, tantaque libidine volgi*
> *Auditur*.
>
> [Juv. *Sat.* 7][18]

As Quintilian didactically explained in the work we just cited, he was right to guard against using the term '*carmen*' for a musical song, and he used this word in a sense completely opposite to the incorrect meaning that contemporary use has given it. '*Carmen*' originally signified something else. Moreover, it was the proper word for signifying declamation, as its primary and true meaning in this very passage establishes. In sum, the expression, "*versus habent carmen*" leaves no doubt about the meaning that the word '*carmen*' must have, either in the passage from Quintilian or in Ovid's poetry.

Believing '*carmen*' always has the distorted meaning it has in Juvenal's poems cited above, where Juvenal simply wants to speak of verses, the true meaning of this word escapes the moderns. Without understanding this, they fail to recognize that the ancients had a notated declamation, that they wrote in notes, although it was not, for them, a work of music. Another badly interpreted word has contributed a great deal to conceal from modern authors the existence of declamation. I speak of the word '*cantus*' and its derivatives. Modern critics understand '*cantus*' as if it signified a musical song. Indeed, in some writings, they want to define it as a 'song in general,' a recitation subject to following a melody that is written in notes. They have understood '*canere*' as if it always signifies what we properly call 'to sing' [*chanter*]. This is the main source of the error that makes people think that the 'song' of ancient dramatic works was a song properly speaking, because ancient authors uniquely used the terms 'song' and 'to sing' when they were speaking of the performance of these works. Before setting out my opinion by means of new proofs derived from the way in

17 The *Thebaid* is a Latin epic poem written in hexametre by Publius Papinius Statius (ca. AD 45–96).

18 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.81–86: "When Statius has made Rome happy by fixing a day, everyone rushes to hear his gorgeous voice and the poetry of his darling *Thebaid*. Their hearts are captivated by the sheer lusciousness he inspires and the crowd listens in sheer ecstasy."

which notated declamation was performed in ancient theatre, I believe it is necessary to explain that the word 'song' signified in both Greek and Latin not only musical song, but also every type of declamation, as well as simple recitation. As a result, we should not infer from what is said by ancient authors that actors sang, or that the actors were singing, taking the word 'to sing' according to the meaning we commonly give it. The reputation of modern authors, which my view contradicts, demands that I prove this definitively. I hope not to be blamed for the multitude of passages that I will put forward in order to prove a point that two or three of these passages could, perhaps sufficiently, accomplish.

CHAPTER 6

That in Ancient Writers, the Words 'to Sing' Often Mean 'to Declaim' and Sometimes Even 'to Speak.'

Strabo, who lived during the reign of Augustus, tells us about the origin of the misuse of the words 'song,' 'to sing,' and their derivatives. He wrote that [*Geog*. Bk. 1],[1] in early times, everything that was written was written in verse. Since all verses were sung in those times, people were accustomed to say 'to sing' to mean, in general, 'to recite' a work. After the practice of no longer singing all poetry had been introduced, and simply reciting some types of verse began, people did not stop always calling the recitation of poetry singing. There was even more, Strabo added. People continued to say 'to sing' instead of 'to recite' after composition in prose began. Thus people went as far as to say 'to sing the prose,' instead of 'to recite the prose.'

Since we do not have in our language a single word that translates *canere*, the reader will need to excuse the frequent paraphrases I have already employed, and will need to continue to employ, to translate it. I do so to avoid the ambiguities into which I would fall, if I used the phrase 'to sing' by itself to speak on the one hand of the performance of a musical song and, on the other, a performance of notated declamation.

Let us now introduce the passages from ancient authors that provide evidence that, though Greeks and Latins gave the name 'song' to the declamation of their plays, this declamation was nevertheless not musical song.

In Cicero's dialogues, *The Orator*, Crassus is one of the interlocutors.[2] He remarked that his mother-in-law Laelia spoke plainly and without affectation, but with overly strong and frequent emphases. He then added, "When I hear Laelia speak, I think that I am listening to performances of plays by Plautus or Naevius" [*Orat*. Bk. 3].[3] The passage of Cicero that I have cited here will subse-

1 Strabo (ca. 64 BC–AD 24), Greek philosopher, historian, and geographer, best known his book *Geographica* [Geography]. This work is a compendium of the geographical knowledge of Strabo's time.

2 Du Bos refers to the plural 'dialogues' because *The Orator* is composed of three books with three distinct dialogues, addressed to his brother Quintus.

3 Cicero, *Orator* 3.12.45: *"Equidem cum audio socrum meam Laeliam—facilius enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant, quod multorum sermonis expertes ea tenent semper quae prima didicerunt—sed eam sic audio ut Plautum mihi aut Naevium videar audire*." "For my own part when I hear my wife's mother Laelia—since it is easier for women to keep the

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_101

quently be quoted in its entirety. Laelia did not sing while speaking around the house. Thus, those who recited the plays of Plautus and Naevius did not sing. Cicero also said, in another work, that comic poets made the feet and rhythms of their verse nearly imperceptible so that they better resemble ordinary conversation. *At comicorum senarii propter similitudinem sermonis sic saepe sunt abiecti, ut non numquam vix in eis numerus et versus intellegi possit. Quo est ad inveniendum difficilior in oratione numerus quam in versibus* [In *Orat.*].[4] This attention to the imitation of ordinary conversation would have been lost, if actors had sung these verses.

However, ancient authors used the word 'to sing' when they spoke of the recitation of comedies and also used it in speaking of the recitation of tragedies. Donatus and Evanthius,[5] who lived during the reign of Constantine the Great, wrote, in a book entitled *Greek Anthology*,[6] that tragedy and comedy at first consisted in verses set to music, that was sung by a chorus accompanied by wind instruments. *Comedia fere vetus, ut ipsa quoque olim Tragedia, simplex carmen* [fuit] *quod chorus cum tibicine concinebat*.[7] Isidore of Seville also calls *singers* those who perform tragedies and those who perform comedies. [*Tragoedi*] *sunt qui antiqua gesta atque facinora sceleratorum regum luctuosa carmine, spectante populo, concinebant. Comoedi sunt, qui privatorum hominum acta dictis aut gestu exprimunt* [*Etym*. Bk. 18, ch. 45].[8] Horace, before explaining in his *Art of Poetry* what must be done to compose a good comedy, defines

---

old pronunciation unspoiled, as they do not converse with a number of people and so always retain the accents they heard first—well, I listen to her with the feeling that I am listening to Plautus or Naevius." Gnaeus Naevius (ca. 270–201 BC), Roman poet and playwright. Only fragments of his works survive.

4 Cicero, *Orator* 55.184–185: "But the *senarii* of comedy are often so lacking in elevation of style because of their resemblance to ordinary conversation that sometimes it is scarcely possible to distinguish rhythm and verse in them. All the more difficult, then, to discover the rhythm in prose!"

5 The name 'Euthymius' appears in Du Bos' text. Likely, however, Du Bos refers to Evanthius Grammaticus, also known as Euanthius (d. AD 358), Latin grammarian active in Constantinople and, unlike St. Euthymius, a contemporary of Constantine the Great.

6 Du Bos gives the title as, "*De Tragedia et Comedia Commentatiunculae*."

7 "Commentary on Evanthius and Donatus," *Greek Anthology*, vol. 8, 1684: "Old Comedy just as also Tragedy once was, was a simple song which the chorus used to perform with flutists." The *Greek Anthology* is a compendium of ancient Greek and Byzantine poems collected in the Middle Ages. The popularity of this work accounts for the reason we continue to use the word 'anthology' to describe collections of works. Du Bos would have known the edition by Maximus Planudes (ca. 1260–ca. 1305), Byzantine scholar, translator and theologian assembled in 1301 but first published in 1494.

8 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 18.45–46: "Tragic actors are those who used to the ancient deeds

a good comedy as one that engages the spectators until the singer says to them 'applaud.' *Donec cantor 'vos plaudite' dicat*.[9] Who was this singer? One of the actors. The actor who performed comedy, Roscius, for example, was supported by an accompaniment just as the performer of tragedy was, as we shall see. It was said of both of them 'that they sang.'

Quintilian complained that the orators of his time argued in court as actors recited in the theatre. We have already related what he said. Can we believe that orators sang as one sings in our opera? Another passage [Bk. 1, ch. 10][10] concerns the verses that a student must read in private to study pronunciation. Quintilian forbids him to read them with the same emphasis in which canticles are recited on stage. Soon we shall see that the canticles were the parts of plays in which the declamation was most song-like. If this song had been real song, as we understand it, it would have been pointless for Quintilian to say that, *sit autem in primis lectio virilis* [...] *non tamen in canticum dissoluta*[11] to forbid him to use the song of the canticles when this was not a song in our sense of the word.

This author also said, in a passage that I have already quoted, that those who perform comedies spoke in a natural manner. At least, they did not depart so much from nature that they misrepresented it. Rather, they elevated the manner of speaking in ordinary conversations by means of ornaments that the art permitted. *Actores comici, qui neque ita prorsus, ut nos vulgo loquimur, pronuntiant, quod esset sine arte, neque procul tamen a natura recedunt, quo vitio periret imitatio; sed morem communis huius sermonis decore quodam scaenico exornant* [*Inst*. Bk. 2, ch. 1].[12] The reader may judge if this is singing.

Finally, Quintilian, after having forbidden, in a passage that we have quoted, the orator to sing like actors, added that he was far from forbidding sustained declamation and the *song* suited to judicial eloquence. Cicero himself, Quintilian continues, has recognized the suitability of muffled 'singing.' *Quid ergo? non*

---

and crimes of wicked kings in a sorrowful song to viewing people. Comedic actors are those who imitate the deeds of private individuals in words and action."

9 Horace, *Art of Poetry* l. 155: "Until the singer says 'You! Applaud!' "

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.

11 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.8.2: "The first point is that his reading should be manly ... but not degenerating into sing-song."

12 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.10.13: "Comic actors in fact do this: they neither deliver their speeches exactly as we talk in ordinary life, because that would be inartistic, nor on the other hand do they depart much from nature, which would destroy the mimicry; instead, they enhance the manner of our ordinary speech with some of the graces of the stage."

et Cicero dicit esse aliquem in oratione 'cantum obscuriorem'? [...] *Ostendam non multo post, ubi et quatenus recipiendus sit hic flexus et cantus* [*Inst*. 11, ch. 3].[13]

When Juvenal praised Quintilian in his Seventh Satire, he says, among other things, that this orator 'sang' very well when he bothered to take the care and make the preparation that the Romans took to cleanse the vocal organs, of which we shall speak below.

> [...] *Orator quoque maximus et jaculator,*
> *Et si perfrixit; cantat bene*. [...]
> [See Chapter Fifteen][14]

Did Quintilian, when he spoke in public, sing in the sense that we give to the term?

But, someone will say, ancient choruses sang real music. When the actors sang, they sang like the choruses. Do you not see, asked Seneca, how many different sounds there are in a chorus: sopranos, tenors, and basses? Wind instruments are combined with men's and women's voices. However, a unified sound emerges from the mixture. By not distinguishing the sounds, we hear everything. *Non vides, quam multorum vocibus chorus constet? Unus tamen ex omnibus redditur; aliqua illic acuta est, aliqua gravis, aliqua media. Accedunt viris feminae, interponuntur tibiae. Singulorum illic latent voces, omnium apparent* [*Epist*. 84].[15] This passage is found almost word for word in Macrobius. He adds this reflection: *Fit concentus ex dissonis* [*Saturn*. Bk. 1, in preface].[16] All of these sounds form a single performance.

In the first place I respond that it is not very clear, on the basis of this passage, that choruses sang in our manner. True, at first it appears that several people could not declaim in unison, even supposing that their declamation was concerted. We cannot imagine that these choruses were anything but a mob. But though it seems *prima facie* impossible that people could declaim in unison,

---

13 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.60: "But does not even Cicero say that there is a sort of 'muffled song' in oratory? ... I shall shortly explain where and to what extent we should accept this variation of pitch, which is indeed a 'song.'"

14 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.193–194: "The greatest orator and javelin thrower sings well, unless he has caught a cold."

15 Seneca, *Epistle* 84.9–10: "Do you not see how many voices there are in a chorus? Yet out of the many only one voice results. In that chorus one voice takes the tenor, another the bass, another the baritone. There are women, too, as well as men, and the flute is mingled with them. In that chorus the voices of the individual singers are hidden; what we hear is the voices of all together."

16 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* Preface 9: "Concord comes from dissonance."

it does not follow that this is really so. It would even be reckless to believe so easily what our imagination thinks possible. This is because, we freely assume that things are impossible when we cannot see how to do it. Most people are even content to give fifteen minutes of attention to reflecting on how to do it. Perhaps after a month of thought, we would find these very things possible in principle, and after six months of application we would even find them possible in practice. Another person could perhaps imagine some means that are not within reach of our minds. This discussion would take us out of our way. So I suppose that choruses sung some of their parts in musical harmony, but it does not follow that the actors also sang.

We ourselves have several dramatic pieces in which the actors only speak, though the choruses sing. Such are, for example, Racine's *Esther* and *Athalia*.[17] Such is *Psyche*, a tragedy written by the great Corneille and Molière.[18] We even have comedies of this sort. We know very well why we do not have a greater number. It is certainly not because this manner of performing dramatic pieces is unsuccessful.

I will support this response with one reflection: the ancients used different instruments to accompany the choruses from those used to support the spoken text. This practice of using different instruments in the two accompaniments proves something. *Quando enim chorus canebat, choricis tibiis, id est choraulicis, artifex concinebat, in cantico autem pythaulicis responsabat*, wrote Diomedes [*On the art of gramm*. Bk. 3].[19] Be that as it may, suppose that we should understand the term 'to sing' in its strict sense when we are concerned with the song of choruses. It does not follow that we must understand this word in the same sense when we are concerned with spoken text. Our proofs and arguments continue to be conclusive.

17 *Esther* (1689) is, as Du Bos suggests, a tragedy in verse with sung choruses. The plot is taken from *The Book of Esther*. Jean-Baptiste Moreau (1656–1733), French composer, wrote the music. Each of the five acts ends in a chorus set to music by Moreau.

18 *Psyché* (1671) is a *tragicomédie en ballet*. It began as a prose text by Molière. Subsequently, Molière turned the Preface into verse. Corneille and Quinault versified the remainder of the text. They wrote all of the verse that was set to music. Lully composed the music.

19 Diomedes, *The Art of Grammar* 1.492. Quotation corrected. "When the chorus sang, the musician accompanied them on choral flutes, but in the canticles another musician accompanied them on Pythian flutes."

CHAPTER 7

New Proofs That Ancient Theatrical Declamation Was Composed and Written in Notes. Proof Taken from the Fact That the Actor Reciting It Was Accompanied by Instruments.

It therefore seems evident that the song of dramatic works recited in ancient theatres had neither slurred notes, vocal appoggiaturas, sustained trills, nor other characteristics of our musical songs. In short, their song was a declamation like ours. This recitation was nevertheless composed, since it was supported by a basso continuo that apparently matched the sound made by the person who declaimed. This is because the sound a person makes in declaiming is less strong and less booming than the same person would make were he to sing. In the first place, a person does not vibrate or agitate as much air in declaiming as in singing. In the second place, when we declaim, we do not always strike the air against parts [of our vocal tract] that have so much power, and which shiver the air when we sing. The air resounds more or less according to the extent to which it has been disturbed. By the way, this is why the voices of Italian singers are louder than those of French singers. Italian singers can produce merely by means of their vocal chords several sounds that French singers can only produce by means of their cheeks.

Thus, I believe that the basso continuo, which accompanied the actors' declamation, made only a very quiet sound. We should not base our idea on the basso continuo of our opera. This would only create baseless difficulties on a matter uncontested by the testimony of the most respectable ancient authors who wrote about what they regularly saw.

Cicero said that trained musicians knew, from the minute that they heard the first notes of a prelude, whether they were going to see *Antiope*[1] or *Andromeda*,[2] when the other spectators could guess nothing. *Quam multa quae nos fugiunt in cantu exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati, qui primo inflatu tibicinis Antiopam esse aiunt aut Andromacham, cum id nos ne suspicemur quidem*

1 *Antiope* is a fragmentary play written ca. 410 BC by Euripides (ca. 480–ca. 406 BC), an important ancient Greek playwright.

2 *Andromache* is also a play by Euripides.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_102

[*Acad. Quest.* Bk. 4].[3] *Antiope* and *Andromache* are two tragedies of which Cicero speaks on different occasions in his works.

What follows will show that the instruments did not stop playing after the prelude, but that they continued and accompanied the actor. After having spoken about Greek poetry, where metre is nearly undetectable, Cicero adds that the Latins also had verses that could be recognized as being verses only when they heard them recited with an accompaniment. For example, he cites verses from the tragedy *Thyestes*[4] that one could mistake for prose when not heard with their accompaniment. *Quorum similia sunt quaedam etiam apud nostros, velut illa in Thyeste. "Quemnam te esse dicam? qui tarda in senectute?" Et quae sequuntur; quae, nisi cum tibicen accessit orationis sunt solutae simillima* [*Orat. for M. Brut.*].[5]

The tragedy *Thyestes* from which Cicero drew these lines was the one he often cited as a work by the poet Ennius [*In Tusc. Quest.*],[6] and not the one Varius[7] composed on the same subject.

Tusculan Disputations 1 reports a passage from a tragedy where the ghost of Polydorus begs that his body be buried to put an end to the miseries he endures. Cicero then adds, "I cannot conceive that this ghost could be as tormented as it says, when I hear it recited in properly dramatic verse and when I find it fits so well with the instruments."

> *'Neu reliquias, quaeso, meas sieris denudatis ossibus,*
> *Per terram sanie delibutas foede divexarier.'*
> *Non intelligo quid metuat, cum tam bonos septenarios fundat ad tibiam*.[8]

---

3 Cicero, *Academica* 2.20. The preceding sentence is a translation of the Latin text.

4 *Thyestes* is a tragic play written by Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 4 BC–AD 65), otherwise known as Seneca the Younger.

5 Cicero, *Orator* 55.184: "We have something like this at times in Latin poetry; this, for example, from the *Thyestes*: '*quemnam te esse dicam? Qui tarda in senectute?*' and the rest of the passage; unless accompanied by the pipe, it is exactly like prose." Latin corrected.

6 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.107: "In Ennius Thyestes utters curses in quite magnificent verses, praying first that Atreus may die by shipwreck: a cruel prayer this no doubt; for such an end involves grievous consciousness of death: the following means nothing:

> Right on the top of rugged rocks transfixed and burst asunder,
> Hung by the flank, the rocks with filth, gore, and black blood he spatters."

7 Lucius Varius Rufus (ca. 74–14 BC), Roman poet. He is known for his epic poetry. His version of *Thyestes* was highly praised by ancient writers, including Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.98: "Varius' *Thyestes* can be compared with any Greek tragedy."

8 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.106–107:

> And suffer not my poor remains, I pray, with bones all stripped and bare,
> Along the ground with gore besmeared in pieces to be foully torn.

One can see in Diomedes why I translate '*septenarios*' by 'dramatic verses' [*Art. Gramm*. Bk. 3, ch. 2].[9]

Polydorus' ghost was supported by an accompaniment when it recited its lines. Now, I will also report two passages from Cicero that seem so decisive to me that the reader will accuse me of having copied from others.

This author, after having said that an older orator can slow his declamation down, adds, "I cite Roscius again here, the great actor, whom I have already cited a number of times as an example for orators to study many parts of their art. Roscius[10] said that he declaimed much more slowly when he was older, and that he required the *chanteurs* to speak more softly and the instruments to slow the tempo of their metre. If the comic actor, constrained to follow a regulated tempo," Cicero continued, "can ease himself in his old age by slowing down his tempi, there is good reason that an orator can slow his delivery. Not only is the orator master of the rhythm and tempo of his speech, but since he speaks in prose, without being required to interact with anyone else, he is free to be the master of the tempo of his phrasing, and never has to speak any more syllables in a single breath than is comfortable for him." *Quamquam, quoniam multa ad oratoris similitudinem ab uno artifice sumimus, solet idem Roscius dicere, se, quo plus sibi aetatis accederet, eo tardiores tibicinis modos, et cantus remissiores esse facturum. Quod si ille, astrictus certa quadam numerorum moderatione et pedum, tamen aliquid ad requiem senectutis excogitat, quanto facilius nos non laxare modos, sed totos mutare possumus*! [*Orat*. Bk. 1].[11]

Everyone knows that Roscius, a contemporary and friend of Cicero, became famous for his talents and probity. Everyone was so keen on him that, when he acted less well than usual, people said that he was not paying attention, or that he had a case of indigestion, an affliction common to actors. '*Noluit*,' *inquiunt*,

---

I do not understand what he is afraid of, seeing that he pours out such a stream of fine seven-foot verses.

Latin corrected.

9 Diomedes, *The Art of Grammar* 3.2.

10 Quintus Roscius (ca. 126–62 BC), Roman actor. Roscius was a friend of Cicero's and gave him acting lessons. Born a slave, Roscius rose to enormous notoriety as a leading actor in his day.

11 Cicero, *Orator* 1.60.254: "And yet, as we are taking from a single artist a number of details for our likeness of an orator, that same Roscius is fond of saying, that, the older he grows, the slower he will make the flute-player's rhythms and the lighter the music. Now if he, fettered as he is by a definite system of measures and metres, is none the less thinking out some relief for his old age, how much more easily can we not merely slacken our methods, but change them altogether!"

'*hodie agere Roscius*,' *aut* '*crudior fuit*' [*Orat*. Bk. 3].[12] In truth, the greatest praise one can give to people who excel in their art is to say they are just like Roscius in their field. *Iam diu consecutus est ut in quo quisque artificio excelleret; is in suo genere Roscius diceretur* [*Orat*. Bk. 1].[13]

In another part of his work, Cicero explains that, as he aged, Roscius controlled his speech. During the accompaniment, and for those who spoke for him in certain parts of the work, which we will explain below, Roscius demanded that the tempo that everyone was required to follow should be slowed down. In the first book of the *Laws*, Cicero speaks through Atticus: *Ut quem ad modum Roscius familiaris tuus in senectute numeros in cantu … cecinerat ipsasque tardiores fecerat tibias*. "For just as your friend Roscius in his old age rendered the recitatives [more softly], he obliged the actor who was reciting to speak more slowly, and even had the flutes adopt a slower beat, following this new tempo."[14]

After having spoken against orators who declaim at the bar as if they were declaiming on stage, Quintilian says, "If this practice should have a place, it should also be the case that our orators should be accompanied by lyres and flutes while declaiming." He means that theatrical declamation is so varied that it is difficult to engage properly with all the different tones that are required when someone wants to declaim as if he is on stage. It is equally difficult to be assisted by an accompaniment that helps to achieve those tones, and to prevent oneself from making the wrong vocal inflexions. *Quod si omnino recipiendum est, nihil causae est cur non illam vocis modulationem fidibus ac tibiis … adiuvemus* [*Inst*. Bk. 11, ch.].[15]

Quintilian frequently said that an orator need not declaim like an actor. According to ancient views on the dignity of the orator, the accompaniment that was required for declaiming on stage was completely inappropriate [for the orator]. When he spoke in public, Cicero refused to have a musician behind him, creating tones for him, although this provision had been authorized in

12 Cicero, *Orator* 1.27.124: "People say, 'Roscius was not in the mood for acting today,' or 'He was out of sorts.'"

13 Cicero, *Orator* 1.28.130: "Accordingly he has long ago brought it about that, in whatsoever craft a man excelled, the same was called a Roscius in his own line."

14 Cicero, *On laws* 1.4.11; Latin corrected. The text immediately following is a gloss on the Latin passage. The translation is this: "For just as your friend Roscius in his old age rendered the recitatives [more softly] and even had the flutes adopt a slower tempo, so you are moderating somewhat, day by day …"

15 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.59: "If this is held to be at all acceptable, there is no reason why we should not accompany the voice with the lyre or the pipes." Citation is missing a chapter number.

Rome by the example of Gracchus.[16] "It is beneath the orator," Cicero said, "to need the same help in order to properly adopt the tones he needs to use in declaiming" [*Orat*. Bk. 3].[17]

In fact, Quintilian reports that Gracchus, one of the most famous orators of his day, had a musician sitting behind him with a wind instrument, who from time to time, while Gracchus was orating, gave him his note. *Contenti simus exemplo C. Gracchi, praecipui suorum temporum oratioris, cui contionanti consistens post eum musicus fistula, quam tonarion vocant, modos quibus deberet intendi ministrabat* [Bk. 1, ch. 12].[18] It turns out that other orators followed Gracchus' example, and the flute that assisted them for this purpose of which we speak had a particular name. It was called a '*tonorium*.'[19] We should not find it strange that, subsequently, actors were assisted by an accompaniment, even though they did not sing in our style and they only recited notated declamations.

Finally, we see in one of Lucian's writings that Solon, after having spoken to the Scythian Anarchasis about tragic and comic actors, asked him whether he had noticed the flutes and instruments which accompanied them in their recitations, and, to translate word for word, "which sang with them." I have quoted a passage from Diomedes, which provides evidence that the canticles and monologues were accompanied. *In canticis autem Pythaules Pythicis respondebat* [*On the art of gramm*. Bk. 3].[20]

I imagine that the composition played by the basso continuo accompanying actors while declaiming was different for dialogues and for monologues. It is pretty obvious that monologues were performed very differently than dialogues. I believe that during the performance of dialogues, the basso continuo only played some long notes here and there, and that it listened for those moments when the actor needed to hear tones that were difficult to hit with

16 Gaius Sempronius Gracchus (154–121 BC), Roman politician and orator. His eventful political life, including his fateful last days before he committed suicide lest he be killed by the Roman Senate, are detailed in Plutarch's *Gaius Gracchus*.

17 This may be a reference to Cicero, *Orator* 3.60.225–61.227: "But you will leave the piper at home, and only take with you down to the house the perception that his training gives you."

18 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.27: "Let us be content for the moment with the example of Gaius Gracchus, the leading orator of his age, who, when he was addressing the assembly, used to have a musician standing behind him with a pipe (in Greek, it is called a *tonarion*) with which the man indicated the tones in which he was to pitch his voice."

19 A tonorium was a pitch-pipe used by ancient Romans to regulate the voices of orators, actors and singers.

20 Diomedes, *The Art of Grammar* vol. 1: "The flute player (*Pythaules*) used to resound in the Pythican songs."

precision. The sound of the instruments was thus not continuous throughout the dialogues, as our accompaniments can be. But it was heard now and then, providing the same service to the actor that the flautist provided to Gracchus. The flautist sat behind Gracchus when he was orating to give him the tones he needed. Gracchus even used this device when he delivered those awful diatribes that led citizens to arm themselves against one another, which set the most fearsome party in Rome against the orator [Quint. Bk. 1, ch. 12. Aul. Gel. Bk. 1, ch. 11].[21]

I believe that the basso continuo that accompanied monologues, or canticles, which were the same thing, as I will show, was used more there than in dialogues. It also seems that it imitated the subject and, to use this expression, that it rivalled it. My opinion is based on two passages, the first being from Donatus. This author says, in a passage that I have already cited, that it was not the poet but a professional musician who performed the monologue's song: *Modis cantica temperabantur non a poeta, sed a perito artis musices factis* [*Fragments of Comedy and Trag.*].[22] The other passage is taken from the treatise *On Public Shows* that survives among the works by Saint Cyprian. In speaking of instrumentalists that we hear on stage, the author says, "one draws sorrowful sounds from his flute; another contends with the chorus who will best be heard; or else he vies with the actor's voice, trying to speak with his fingers." *Alter lugubres sonos spiritu tibiam instante moderatur. Alter cum choris et cum hominis canora voce contendens spiritu suo loqui digitis elaborat*.[23]

True, according to the view of better critics, the treatise *On Public Shows* just cited was not written by Saint Cyprian. Had we been disputing about a theological question, the authority of the text would matter a lot. But on the issue with which we are concerned, this testimony is no less authentic. It suffices that the author of this work, who has been known for many centuries, lived when ancient theatres were still open. Whoever he was, the author of this work wrote it only to show that a Christian should never attend such public shows in his day, that he should not, as Saint Augustine said, participate in either the infamies of the theatre, the impious extravagances of the circus, or

21 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.27–28; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 1.11.10–16.

22 Donatus, *Fragments on Tragedy and Comedy* 8.9: "But *cantica* were regulated by modes made not by the playwright but by someone skilled in music." Aelius Donatus (fl. AD 350), Roman grammarian was at this time thought to be the author of this work, but it is now attributed to the post-classical grammarian Evanthius (d. 359).

23 Saint Cyprian, *On Public Shows* 7. The translation of the passage is given before the Latin text. Thaschus Caecilius Cyprianus, known in English as Cyprian (ca. 200–258), Berber, Christian writer, martyr, and Bishop of Carthage. He was executed for his beliefs on the orders of the Roman proconsul in Carthage.

the cruelties of the amphitheatre. What I just said about the treatise *On Public Shows* contained among the writings of Saint Cyprian, I can also say, so as not to repeat myself later, of several writings we have under the name Justin the Martyr, which critics resist attributing to him. It is enough that those writings, which are very old, were composed when the theatres were still open. This makes the facts that I draw from their testimony true.

This study of all the artifices capable of adding power and enthusiasm to declamation, and these refinements in the art of using the voice, should not be regarded by those acquainted with ancient Greece and Rome as the strange stuff of dreams. Not only was eloquence a means to make a pretty penny in those days, but it was also, so to speak, fashionable. A young man of high social standing, and whose lighthearted manner we may call 'the fine flower of the court,' considered himself capable of making speeches and pleading before the courts on behalf of his friends' causes, just as he considered himself to have jaunty companions and good taste. He was praised for pleading in the chivalric verses written for him:

Namque et nobilis et decens
Et pro sollicitis non tacitus reis
Et centum puer artium
Late signa feret militiae tuae.
[Hor. *Car.* Bk. 3. *Od.* 1][24]

says Horace, in speaking to Venus of one of these men of distinction. We can imagine that this world, in which young people have such a desire to please, shows as much regard for a young, eloquent man as a young, talented soldier. Sovereigns often speak in public this way. They prided themselves on writing their own speeches, and we note that Nero was the first Roman emperor who needed someone else to write them for him.

Suetonius[25] and Dio[26] tell us that this emperor was so skilled at the art of declamation that he played leading roles in the tragedies *Canace*,[27] *Orestes*,[28]

24 Horace, *Odes* 4.1.13–16: "For he is aristocratic and good-looking, he is an eloquent counsel for anxious defendants, and as a young fellow of a hundred accomplishments he will carry far and wide the banner of your army."

25 Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. AD 69–after 122), Roman historian.

26 Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40–ca. 115), Greek orator and historian of the Roman empire.

27 *Canace* is a tragedy by Sperone Speroni (1500–1588), written in 1546. It is based on the Greek legend of Canace, who was Poseidon's lover.

28 *Orestes* is a tragedy by Euripides (ca. 480–ca. 406 BC), written in 408 BC.

Oedipus[29] and *Hercules Furens*.[30] Suetonius recounts an incident that happened during Nero's portrayal of Hercules, which amused the audience as much as any comic scene. "Among other themes he sang 'Canace in Labour,' 'Orestes the Matricide,' 'The Blinding of Oedipus,' and 'The Frenzy of Hercules.' At the last performance, they say that a young recruit, seeing the emperor dressed and bound with chains, as the subject required, rushed forward to lend him aid." *Inter caetera cantavit 'Canacem parturientem,' 'Orestem matricidam,' 'Oedipodem excoecatum,' 'Herculem insanum.' In qua fabula est tyrunculum militem ad custodiam aditus positum, cum eum ornari catenis ac vinciri, sicut argumentum postulabat, videret, accurrisse ferendae opis gratia*.[31]

I will provide an even more important example. Thrasea Poetus was the famous Roman senator Nero put to death when, after killing so many eminent men, he wanted to kill virtue itself. Thrasea Poetus performed a role in a tragedy in his hometown of Padua. In his *Annals* 16, Tacitus wrote: *Quia idem Trasea Patavii unde ortus erat, ludis Cesticis a Trojano Antenore institutis, habitu tragico cecinerat*.[32]

29 *Oedipus Rex* is a tragedy by Sophocles (ca. 497–405 BC), written ca. 429 BC.

30 *Hercules Furens* [The Madness of Hercules] is a tragedy by Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BC–AD 65).

31 Suetonius, *Nero* 21. We have added a translation of the first sentence of the Latin quotation, which was omitted by Du Bos.

32 Tacitus, *Annals* 16.21: "in Patavium, his native place, the same Thrasea had sung in tragic costume at the … Games instituted by Trojan Antenor."

CHAPTER 8

Of the Wind and String Instruments Used in the Accompaniments.

I return to the basso continuo. We see in an ancient bas-relief what we have read about in Cicero, that is, the instruments were not silenced after the prelude. Rather, they continued to play, accompanying the actor. Bartholini the Younger, who wrote in Rome his book on ancient flutes, provides in this work an engraved plate of an antique bas-relief [*On Anc. Fl.* ch. 10, p. 220].[1] This bas-relief shows a scene in which two actors perform in a comedy. One of them, dressed in a long robe, appears to be the master. He takes his slave by the hand. In his other hand he held a type of strap, with which he means to strike the slave. Two other actors, dressed like the first in the mask that Roman actors wore, enter the stage. In the background, a standing man plays the flute.

The basso continuo was usually composed of flutes and other wind instruments that the Romans called *tibiae*. Nevertheless, they sometimes used instruments with strings stretched on a type of frame. Their concavity had an effect similar to that made by our viols. Depending on how the frame and depending on how the belly in the lower part were configured, these instruments were given different names. Some were called *testudines*, and others *citharae*, that is, lyres or harps.

From the start, the ancients wanted to produce more notes with these instruments than they had strings. Consequently, they shortened the string from which they intended to draw a higher pitch than it produced when it was played unstopped. They did this by pinching the string with two fingers of the left hand, that were apparently protected by ivory thimbles, while the instrument was plucked with the right hand. The lyre players held in their right hand a type of short bow made of a piece of ivory, or some other hard material, and shaped for this purpose. It was called a '*pecten*' in Latin. Later, the ancients added more strings to the lyre, so they had no more need for this practice.

Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that in his time, the 4th century AD, there were lyres as large as a small carriage. *Fabricantur hydraulica et lyrae ad speciem carpentorum ingentes* [Amm. *Hist.* Bk. 4].[2] In fact, it seems that in Quintilian's time, two centuries before Ammianus Marcellinus, each note already had its

1 Caspar Bartholini, *On Old Flutes and their Ancient Use* 10.220.

2 Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 14.6.18: "water-organs are manufactured and lyres as large as

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_103

own string on the lyre. According to Quintilian, "having first established five notes on the lyre, they then fill up the intervals between the strings with a variety of notes, proceeding then to insert yet others in between these, so that the original few intervals come to have many subdivisions."[3] *Cum in cithara quinque constituerunt sonos, plurima deinde varietate complent spatia illa nervorum, atque his, quos interposuerunt, inserunt alios, ut pauci illi transitus multos gradus habeant*.

Our stringed instruments have a neck which enables us to produce different notes with one string, by pressing the string against the neck. They would have been much better for accompaniment, especially since we play them with a very long bow, fitted with horsehair. This enables us to prolong notes with ease, which the ancients could not do with their bows. But I think that the ancients were not familiar with stringed instruments with a neck. At least, ancient monuments, of which we have a large number, only depict strings on an open frame. This is why, it would appear, the ancients chose wind instruments rather than lyres for accompaniment, even though the lyres eventually had thirty or forty principal and subsidiary strings [*Onomast.* Poll.].[4] However, they had a large number of stringed instruments, whose design and use are unknown. But wind instruments are so suitable for accompaniment that we use them in our continuo groups, even though we have several types of viols and violins.[5]

Nevertheless, the ancients sometimes did not use stringed instruments to accompany those who performed tragedies. This is apparent from ancient scholia concerning Greek tragedians and from Plutarch's treatise *On Music*. Horace's *Art of Poetry* also presupposes this practice and Dio[6] reports that, in the time of Nero, stringed instruments were used in the performance of some tragedies.

It is easy to understand, after all that has been said, why they so carefully indicated, beneath the titles of Terence's comedies, the names of the wind instruments they used in the performance of each piece. Without this informa-

---

carriages." Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. 325–ca. 391–400), Roman soldier and historian. His book *Res Gestae* traced the history of Rome from the coronation of emperor Nerva in 96 up to 378. Only the final chapters of the work survive. Citation corrected.

3 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 12.10.68.

4 Pollux, *Onomasticon*. Julius Pollux 4.59–60 (fl. 2nd century AD), Greek sophist, grammarian, and rhetorician. He is the author of *Onomasticon*, a dictionary of Attic synonyms and phrases. It is the source of information about many aspects of daily life in the ancient world. Du Bos would have been familiar with the Latin translation of this work published in 1541.

5 Du Bos refers to the bassoon and similar instruments.

6 Nero reigned from AD 54 to 88.

tion one could not easily understand what effect several scenes would produce in performance. They were necessary instructions for those who would restage them. The range of each type of flute was very limited in Terence's day, since these instruments had only a small number of holes [Horace *On the poet. art*].[7] Thus these instructions prevented people from being mistaken about the type of flute they needed to use and, consequently, mistaken about the pitch at which they needed to declaim several passages of the comedies of this poet.

They did not only change flutes when the choruses came on to sing. They also changed them in the spoken parts. Donatus informs us that they used a type of flute, that the ancients called *tibiae dextrae*, which produced a very low tone, to accompany the serious passages of comedy. They used two other sorts of flutes to accompany light-hearted passages. The ancients called these left-handed flutes and Tyrian flutes, or *serranae*. These passages were naturally spoken in a higher tone of voice than serious passages were. Thus the pitch of these flutes was higher than the pitch of right-handed flutes. In scenes that combined serious and comical elements, all types of flutes were alternately used. *Dextrae tibiae sua gravitate seriam comoediae dictionem pronuntiabant. Seinstrae et Serranae, hoc est Tyriae, acuminis suavitate jocum in comoedia oestendebant. Ubi autem dextra et sinistra acta fabula inscribebatur, mixtim jocos et gravitatem denuntiabat* [*Fragments on com. and trag.*].[8] It seems to me that this passage throws a great deal of light on the titles of Terence's comedies. These have often discomfited learned commentators, who in turn say nothing of moment.

As we have shown in the first volume of this work, the Romans had, according to Donatus, at the time he was writing, four types of comedies. Those of the first type were called *Togatae* or long-robed comedies, and were very serious. The *Taberinariae* were less serious. The *Atellanes* were apparently similar and the *Mimes* must have been complete farces. Thus we ought not to be surprised by the detail into which Donatus goes when speaking generally about the flutes that were used to accompany the performance of comedies.

This passage from Donatus also explains a passage from Pliny in which this historian says that in making left-handed flutes, the bottom of the reed, whose top was used for right-handed flutes, was used. *Eam, quae radicem antecesserat,*

7 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 202–203. The only passage about the earlier stages of the flute in the *Art of Poetry* is the same passage Du Bos quotes later.

8 Donatus, *Fragments on Tragedy and Comedy* 8.11: "The right *tibiae* with their heaviness proclaimed grave speech of the comedy. The left *serranae*, that is Tyrian, with the sweetness of their high pitch indicated humor in the comedy. When it was written the play was performed with right and left, they announced humor and seriousness together."

laevae tibiae convenire, quae cacumen, dexterae [Pliny. Bk. 16, ch. 66].[9] The bottom of the reed was thicker than the top, so it must have produced a higher sound and, consequently, the top of the reed must have produced a lower sound. All physics books provide the reason for this.

But, someone will say, you seem to praise ancient actors for something regarded as a fault. To say that an actor sings is to condemn him. I respond that this expression really is a criticism in our usage, but that is only because of the restricted sense in which we are accustomed to use the words 'to sing' when we use it in speaking of theatrical declamation. The practice is that we only say of an actor that he sings when he sings inappropriately, when he injudiciously inserts exclamations unsuited to what he says, or when by bombastic tones, or tones full of an emphasis incompatible with the meanings of the verse, he puts an incongruous pathos into his declamation. This is always ridiculous when it is affected. We do not say that an actor sings when he appropriately introduces sighs, light and serious accents, and the most varied tones. In short, when he employs declamation approaching musical song in passages where the meanings of the words permit it. We do not say of the actress, who sometimes deigns to play the role of Phaedra in Racine's tragedy, that she sings the speech that begins with these words: *Juste ciel! Qu'ai-je fait aujourd'hui?* [*Trag. of Phèdre* Act 3].[10] This is the case though her declamation differs from musical song only because the sounds a person who declaims makes are not made separately and they are not produced in the same part of the organ of speech as the sounds made by a person who sings.

The bad singing of which we are speaking could not be attributed to actors of antiquity. They had all gone through a long apprenticeship in their art, as I will show below, and they nearly always recited a declamation notated by people who made this their particular profession.

9 Pliny, *Natural History* 16.6.172: "and that one taken from just above the root was suitable for a left-hand pipe and one from just below the top for a right-hand." Citation corrected.

10 Racine, *Tragedie de Phèdre* 3.3.839: "Just heaven! What have I done today?"

CHAPTER 9

On the Difference between Tragic and Comic Declamation. On Composers of Declamation. Reflections concerning the Art of Notating.

There is no doubt that ancient tragic declamation was more serious and more harmonious than comic declamation. Ancient comic declamation was already more varied and melodious than speaking in ordinary conversation. Quintilian said that those who play comic roles do a good job when imitating something with familiar pronunciation, but that they cannot copy it exactly. They embellish their speech with the ornaments and elegance that are available to comic declamation. *Quod faciunt actores comici qui nec ita prosus, ut nos* [*vulgo*] *loquimur, pronunciant, quod esset sine arte, nec procul tamen a natura recedunt, quo vitio periret imitatio; sed morem communis hujus sermonis decore comico exornant* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 2, ch. 11].[1]

After having said that poets who aspire to write tragedies and comedies have uneven success, Plato added that the tragic and comic genres demand their own particular frame of mind. Also, "the same actors are not used for tragedy and comedy" [Plato, *Rep*. Bk. 3].[2] Based on many other passages by ancient writers, we find that acting in tragedies and comedies amounts to two distinct professions, and that it was rare for the same actor to excel at both. Quintilian said that Aesopus[3] acted much more seriously than Roscius because Aesopus made his career in tragedy, whereas Roscius made his in comedy. Each adopted the manners of the genre to which they were especially attached. *Roscius citatior, Aesopus gravior fuit, quod hic tragedias, ille comedias egit* [Quint. *Institut*. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[4] This is the character of Roscius as described by Horace:

> *Quae gravis Aesopus, quae doctus Roscius egit*.[5]

1 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2.11.14. The preceding sentences are a paraphrase of the Latin quotation.

2 Plato, *Republic* 3.395b.

3 Claudius Aesopus (fl. 1st century BC), famous tragic actor. A friend of both Cicero and Roscius, he was esteemed as highly as Roscius, but for different reasons.

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.112. The preceding sentence is a paraphrase of the Latin text.

5 Horace, *Epistles* 2.82: "what stately Aesopus and learned Roscius once acted."

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_104

In his treatise *The Dance*, Lucian said that a tragic actor struggles on stage, that he spins about like a person who is raving mad, and that he sings complaints that are barely tolerable, even in a woman. Lucian adds, who can tolerate a Hercules, covered in the skin of a lion and carrying a club, while humming out verses on stage that contain the story of his labours?[6]

The definition of tragedy and comedy given by the ancients, which we have reported in its proper place, is on its own sufficient to convince us that these poems were recited very differently. Accordingly, I will be content to add to what I have already said, namely, that comic actors wear a type of shoe called *soccus*, whereas tragic actors wear the *cothurn*, a type of buskin with a thick, wooden sole that makes them seem taller than other men, according to the writings of Lucian, Philostratus, and many other writers who regularly saw these things [*Vita Apoll.* 1.6].[7] Lucian also informs us that they padded their costumes so that they would seem proportionate to their enormous height; this fact is confirmed in a letter attributed to Saint Justin the Martyr [*Epistle to Zena and Sarenus*].[8]

Costumes, masks, and decorations used for staging tragedies are also very different from those used in comedy [*Onom.* Poll. Bk. 4, ch. 3].[9] The set decorations used in tragedy could not be used in comedy [Vitruv. Bk. 5, ch. 1].[10] What tragedy uses should represent the Palais and other excellent buildings, as opposed to those used in comedy, which should represent individual people's

6 Lucian, *On Dance* 28: "To be sure, as long as he is an Andromache or a Hecuba, his singing can be tolerated; but when he enters as Hercules in person and warbles a ditty, forgetting himself and taking no shame either for the lion-skin he is wearing or for the club, a man in his right mind may properly term the thing a solecism."

7 Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.2: "he seemed terrifying even while he remained silent on the stage, and when the people saw him taking long strides and gaping wide, standing in such high boots, and dressed in outlandish costume, they already felt some fear at his appearance." Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 15–ca. 100), Greek Neopythagorean philosopher and orator. Philostratus (ca. 170–247), Greek sophist, best known for his popular *Lives of the Sophists*.

8 Justin Martyr, *Epistola ad Zenam et Serenum* [Epistle to Zena and Sarenus]. Justin Martyr (fl. 2nd century), Christian apologist. This is a spurious attribution.

9 Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.115–120.

10 Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 5.6.9: "There are three styles of scenery: one which is called tragic; a second, comic; the third, satiric. Now the subjects of these differ severally from one another. The tragic are designed with columns, pediments and statues and other royal surroundings; the comic have the appearance of private buildings and balconies and projections with windows made to imitate reality, after the fashion of ordinary buildings; the satiric settings are painted with trees, caves, mountains and other country features, designed to imitate landscape." Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (ca. 80–ca. 15 BC), Roman architect, military and civil engineer, author.

homes and other simple buildings. Horace, along with all the other ancient authors who speak in passing about ancient tragic declamation, use expressions that indicate that they were engaged in what we call 'singing.' This is why several ancient authors criticized Saint Justin the Martyr for various reasons in the work just cited, the treatise on the great wailer.[11] The author of the work *On Public Shows*, who has been taken to be Saint Cyprian, called them *illas magnas tragicae vocis insanias* [*On Public Shows*].[12] In his little work composed on the same subject, Tertullian said that "the tragic actor calls out with all his might." *Tragedo vociferante*.[13] Apuleius uses the same terms to say the same thing: *Comoedus sermocinatur, tragoedus vociferator* [*Florid.* Bk. 3].[14] "The comic actor prattles, the tragic one declaims." Lucian, who recorded an interesting description of tragedians and comedians in a conversation he made Solon have with Anacharsis, makes the Tartarian philosopher say that comic actors declaim with much less emphasis than tragic actors [*In Gymn.*].[15]

We also see that Quintilian gets angry and throws invectives against teachers of rhetoric who make their students sing or declaim as if they were declaiming on stage. He carries on in the same way against orators who plead at court [Quint. *Instit.* Bk. 11. ch. 3].[16] It is not out of some capricious aversion to actors that Quintilian forbids orators from imitating theatrical declamation. He had no more aversion to them than Cicero did. He tells us that Demosthenes demanded that the actor Andronicus declaim as well as he could. He not only permitted that young man, eager to make progress in the art of eloquence, to learn the art of gesture. He also allowed him to take some time to attend acting lessons, and, under the guidance of a master, he recommended

11 Justin Martyr, *Epistle to Zena and Sarenus*.

12 Saint Cyprian, *On Public Shows* 7: "those great tragic vocal ravings."

13 Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 25. Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (ca. 155–ca. 240), early Christian writer and Church Father. *On Spectacles* examines the question of whether Christians may attend the theatre and other public entertainments. Tertullian believes that public entertainments are immoral and a misuse of God's creation.

14 Apuleius, *Florida* 18.4. Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis (ca. 124–ca. 170), Numidian philosopher and rhetorician who wrote in Latin. He is most famous for his novel, *The Golden Ass*.

15 Lucian, *Anacharsis, or Athletics* 23: "I have seen the tragedians and comedians that you are speaking of, Solon, if I am not mistaken; they had on heavy, high footgear, clothing that was gay with gold stripes, and very ludicrous head-pieces with great, gaping mouths; they shouted loudly from out of these, and strode about in the footgear, managing somehow or other to do it safely …. The comedians were shorter, nearer to the common level, more human, and less given to shouting, but their headpieces were far more ludicrous."

16 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.57: "Yet all these faults are tolerable compared with the sing-song manner which is the chief problem in every case and every school nowadays—and whether it is more useless than disgusting I do not know!"

that he should study the principles of the art of pronunciation. *Dandum aliquid comoedo quoque, dum eatenus quatenus pronuntiandi scientiam futurus orator desiderat* [Quint. *Instit.* Bk. 1, ch. 3].[17] Elsewhere in that work, Quintilian said that his student needs to learn many things from an actor. *Debet etiam docere comoedus quomodo narrandum, et cetera* [Ibid. Bk. 1, ch. 3].[18]

I will report many passages from ancient authors that, in my opinion, prove my point. At the very least, they will clarify matters. These passages have not had the attention they deserve, because they are buried among other topics that occasioned their authors to write. Once they are gathered together, these passages will require greater attention, because together they work to clarify the issue.

Those who have some familiarity with ancient Greece will not be surprised to read that poets declaimed their own works. *Musici qui erant quondam eidem poetae* [*On the Orat*. Bk. 3],[19] said Cicero, in speaking about ancient Greek poets who wrote the song and form of their verses.

The art of composing theatrical works of declamation was a particular profession in Rome. On the title-pages of comedies written by Terence, along with the name of the poem's author and the name of the head of the comedy troupe that performed them, we see the name of the person who made the declamation in Latin: *qui fecerat modos*.[20] I have already acquainted the reader with the use of the word '*modos*.'[21] Following Donatus, it was customary that whoever composed a declamation put his name at the top, along with the name of the poet who wrote it and the lead actor who performed it. *Qui modos faciebat nomen in principio fabulae et scriptoris et actoris, et suum superimponebat* [Donat. *Fragm. on trag. and com.*].[22] I cite this passage following Gerard Vossius' correction [*Poet*. Ch. 4].[23] More than anything else, the declamation of canticles or monologues that are executed in a unique fashion, and which we are discussing, were never set to music by the poet, but by people skilled in the discipline of musical arts, and who made a career out of per-

17 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.11.1. The preceding sentence contains a paraphrase of the Latin text.

18 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.11.12: "Our actor will also have to teach how to deliver a narrative …"

19 Cicero, *Orator* 3.174: "the musicians, who in the old days were also poets." Latin corrected.

20 He who made notation.

21 Book Three, chapter Two.

22 Donatus, *Fragments on Tragedy and Comedy* 8.10. The preceding sentence is a paraphrase of the Latin text that follows.

23 Gerardus Vossius, *Poeticarum Institutionum Libri Tres* [*Institutes of Poetics in Three Parts*], (Amsterdam: 1647).

forming dramatic works composed by others. These were the artists Quintilian called *artifices pronunciandi*,[24] in a passage I will quote later. Donatus, whom I have already cited, said, *Modis cantica temperabantur, non a poeta, sed a perito artis musices factis*.[25]

Cicero used the same expression, *Facere modos*, to label those who notated declamation in their theatrical works. After having said that Roscius intentionally declaimed some aspects of a piece with less care than the work demanded, and that he placed a shadow over certain aspects of the performance that should have shone, Cicero added, "The success of this practice is so certain that poets and writers of declamation have noticed it along with the actors. They all know how to make use of it."

> *Numquam agit hunc versum Roscius eo gestu quo potest.*
> *Nam sapiens virtuti honorem, praemium, haud praedem petit.*
> *Sed abjicit prorsus ut in proximos.*
> *Ecquid video? Ferro septus possidet aedes sacras,*
> *Incidas, aspiciat, admiretur, stupescat.*
> *Quid ille alter? Quid petam praesidii?*
> *Quam leniter, quam remisse, quam non actuose?*
> *Instat enim,*
> *O Pater! O Patria! O Priami domus!*
> *in quo commoveri tanta actio non posset, si esset consumpta superiore motu et exhausta. Neque id actores prius viderunt quam ipsi poetae, quam denique illi etiam qui fecerunt modos a quibus utrisque summittitur aliquid, deinde augetur, extenuatur, inflatur, variatur, distinguitur.*
>
> [Cic. *On the Orat*. Bk. 3][26]

---

24 Pronunciation artists.

25 Donatus, *Fragments on Tragedy and Comedy* 8.9: "But *cantica* were regulated by modes made not by the playwright but by someone skilled in music."

26 Cicero, *Orator* 3.102:

> When Roscius speaks the lines since for the wise
> Honour is valour's prize and not its prey,
> he never uses the action at his command, but throws them off, so that he can put his whole weight into the next lines—
> But what I see? A sword-girt warrior
> Seated within the sanctuary shrine!
> which he delivers with a stare of stupefied surprise. Again, how quietly and gently and with what little energy the other great actor gives the line,
> What succour shall I seek?
> For he presses on:

Writers of declamation elevated, deflated, and varied the art of recitation. Sometimes a passage would be spoken following the script, and sometimes lower than sense seemed to demand. But it would be raised, when two verses later the actor had to grab the audience's attention. Racine himself taught the actress playing the role of Monime in *Mithridates* to do just this. Equally great as declaimer and poet, Racine taught her to lower her voice while speaking these words, more than their meaning seemed to require:

> *Si le sort ne m'eut donnée à vous,*
> *Mon boneur dépendoit de l'avoir pour époux.*
> *Avant que votre amour m'eut envoyé ce gage,*
> *Nous nous aimions.*
> [Act. 3, scen. 1][27]

In order easily to hit a note an octave higher when she spoke the words: *Nous nous aimions*, she had to say an octave lower, *Seigneur, vous changez de visage*.[28] This extraordinary vocal deportment in declamation was perfect for indicating the mental distress that Monime experienced the moment she perceived that Mithridates, who was about to expose her secret, was putting her and her lover into extreme danger.

To understand ancient passages that speak of theatrical performances, we need to know what happens in modern theatre. We need to consult people who teach these arts, especially those who have some connection to ancient arts, despite the fact that their practice is lost. These are the arts of gesture, composition, and notating declamation. Commentaries written on these passages by illustrious scholars who have had no practical experience are very

---

> O father! O fatherland! O palace of Priam!
> —on which he could not work up such an energetic delivery if he had used up his whole supply of energy on the preceding gesture. Nor did the actors see this sooner than the poets themselves did, or indeed sooner than the composers of the musical accompaniments, for both poets and composers employ a definite fall in tone and then a rise, a sinking and a swell, variations, pauses.

27 Racine, *Mithridates* 3.5:
> Had fate not given me to you,
> My happiness was based on having a spouse.
> Before your love carried me to someone else,
> We loved one another.

Racine's *Mithridates* debuted in 1673. This scene enacts the moment that Mithridates, who is married to Monime, instructs her to marry Xiphares, whom she secretly loves.

28 Racine, *Mithridates* 3.5: "Sir, your face has changed."

poorly explained. I may just as well prefer a commentary on Tacitus written by a Carthusian monk.

From Quintilian's book we see that those *qui faciebant modos*, or notated declamation, were called *artifices pronuntiandi*; literally, 'pronunciation artists.' *Itaque in iis quae ad scaenam componuntur fabulis artifices pronuntiandi*. "Therefore in plays composed for the stage, pronunciation artists," etc [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[29] I will reproduce the whole passage when I talk about masks used by ancient actors.

It is easy to understand how ancients went about notating declamations, as well as comedies, when we reflect on the fact that in their music, they made progressions by smaller intervals than we make in ours. As I have already said in Chapter Seven of this volume, it is very likely that in their written declamations they made notations with accents.

The art of writing songs of all sorts using notation was already well established in Rome in Cicero's day. It was known long before theatres were open. After having explained how Pythagoreans used music, and that Numa, the second Roman king, took some of these usages from Pythagoras' school and introduced them into his little state, Cicero cited this as proof that Numa promoted the custom of singing praises of famous men accompanied by wind instruments. This proves, the author adds, that the art of notating in songs and declamations was known in that period. *Morem apud majores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent, canerent ad tibiam clamorum virorum laudes atque virtutes, ex quo perspicuum est cantus tunc fuisse descriptos vocum sonis, et carmina; quamquam id quidem etiam duodecim tabulae declarant, condi jam solitum esse carmen* [*Quest. Tusc*. Bk. 4].[30] I have already explained above what the Romans meant by the word *carmen*. In *Tusculan Disputations* 5, in speaking of the pleasures remaining to those who had had the misfortune of losing their hearing, Cicero said that although they loved beautiful songs, they still had the pleasure of reading them even if they could not hear them sung. *Et si cantus eos forte delectant, majorem percipi posse legendis his quam audiendis voluptatem*.[31] Generally speaking, Cicero supposed that everyone knew enough

29 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.73. Translation modified.

30 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.3–4: "At banquets it was the custom of our ancestors for the guests at table to sing one after the other to the accompaniment of the flute in praise of the merits of illustrious men. And from this it is clear that, in addition to poems, songs set to music were already at that date written down to guide the voice of the singer. And yet as much as this is formally also shown by the Twelve Tables, namely, that by that time the composition of songs was regularly practiced."

31 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.116–117. The preceding sentence is a paraphrase of the Latin text.

to read at least a little of the written music, and consequently they must have been written for the most part with accents.

Finally, there is a passage from Livy that suffices to prove that the ancients notated theatrical declamations: they wrote in notation, and they performed them using wind instruments. In Book 7, Livy gives a short description of the origin and history of theatrical performances in Rome. After explaining that, in 390 BC, Rome was afflicted with a pestilence, and to make it stop they celebrated with games consisting of theatrical performances, he added: "This was a new departure for a warlike people, whose only exhibitions had been those of the circus; but indeed it began in a small way, as most things do, and even so was imported from abroad. Without any singing, without imitating the actions of singers, players who had been brought in from Etruria danced to the strains of the flautist and performed not ungraceful evolutions in the Tuscan fashion. Next the young Romans began to imitate them, at the same time exchanging jests in uncouth verses, and bringing their movements into a certain harmony with the words. … The native professional actors were called '*histriones*,' from '*ister*,' the Tuscan word for player; they no longer, as before, alternately threw off rude lines hastily improvised, like the Fescennines,[32] but performed medleys, full of musical measures, to melodies which were now written out to go with the flute, and with appropriate gesticulation." *Sine carmine ullo, sine imitandorum carminum actu, ludiones ex Etruria acciti ad tibicinis modos saltantes haud indecoros motus more Tusco dabant. Imitari deinde eos iuventus, simul inconditis inter se iocularia fundentes versibus, coepere; nec absoni a voce motus erant. … Vernaculis artificibus, quia ister Tusco verbo ludio vocabatur, nomen histrionibus inditum; qui non, sicut ante, Fescennino versu similem incompositum temere ac rudem alternis iaciebant, sed impletas modis saturas descripto iam ad tibicenem cantu motuque congruenti peragebant* [Liv. *Histor*. Bk. 7].[33]

I asked several musicians whether it would be difficult to invent characters with which they could write notation for theatrical declamation. We lack the accents for writing the accented notation used by the ancients. These musicians replied that it is possible, and also that they could write notation for declamation that would work for the range and variety of our music, as long as we assign the notes half of an ordinary interval. For example, notes that have

32 Fescennine verses were a very early form of Roman poetry. These popular improvised songs were sung as dialogues. But they derailed into indecent, often vicious attacks and had to be regulated by the Law of the Twelve Tables, which were the basis for Roman law: "If any person has sung or composed against another person a song that causes slander or insult, he shall be clubbed to death" (*Twelve Tables* 8.1).

33 Livy, *History* 7.2. Latin text corrected. The preceding text is a translation of the Latin.

an interval of a semitone in music have just a quarter-tone interval in declamation. This is how they notate vocal rises and falls that are detectable to the human ear.

Our verses do not carry their rhythm with them, as Greek and Roman verses do. But I have also been told that it is not possible to give notes less than half their ordinary value in declamation. One should not give a half-note the value of a quarter-note, or a quarter-note the value of an eighth-note, and one should value the other notes following the proportions, just as one does in declaiming.

I know that it is hard to find people capable of reading this sort of music with ease, or of declaiming its notes. But if you taught a fifteen-year-old how to make this declamation over the course of six months, he would pick it up in no time. Their organs are more adaptable to this declamation, to this spoken word delivered without singing, just as they are more adaptable to the singing of our ordinary music. Exercise and practice are, for the voice, what the bow and fingering hand are for the violin. Can we believe that declamation is any more difficult? It is just a matter of acclimatizing the voice to do what it automatically does in daily conversation. Sometimes we speak quickly, sometimes slowly. We employ all sorts of tones and make various progressions, whether in lowering or raising our voices in all sorts of possible intervals. Notated declamation is nothing other than the tones and tempo of speech written out in notes. Certainly, the difficulty that one encounters in executing a similar note does not approach that of suddenly reading words that one has never read before, or, while being accompanied by a harpsichord, of singing a score that one has not studied. But with exercise, even women can learn how to do these three things at the same time.

Considering the style of writing notation for declamation, whether it is as we have stated or otherwise, it is not as difficult to deduce certain rules, and to put the method into practice, as it is to figure out how to notate the steps and movements of a ballet danced by eight people, especially considering the fact that today the steps are so varied and the movements so interlaced. Yet Feuillet[34] set out to find this art, and his notation teaches dancers how they should move their arms. I should also add that, even though his choreography was not published until 1700,[35] people of that profession, both in France and abroad, already knew how to read it easily.

34 Raoul-Auger Feuillet (ca. 1660–1700), choreographer and dance notator. His *Choréographie, ou l'art de décrire la danse* [Choreography, or the art of describing dance] was published in 1700. Two English translations of the work immediately followed in 1706.

35 Du Bos mistakenly gives the publication date of 1606.

CHAPTER 10

Continuation of the Proofs That Show That the Ancients Notated Declamation. Some Changes to Roman Declamation That Occurred around the Time of Augustus. Comparison of This Change with What Happened To Our Music and Dance under Louis XIV.

Let us return to the factual proofs that show that the ancients notated the declamation of their theatrical pieces. The proofs have a weight greater than reasoning based on possibilities.

Every time Cicero talks about the declamation of dramatic verse, he does not speak as we speak of the declamation of Corneille's verse, which is arbitrary. Cicero describes the declamation of dramatic verse as a constant melody, in accordance with which these verses were always spoken. He speaks of the melody as a beauty, so to speak, as inherent in the verses that he mentions as the beauty that results from their meaning, and from the choice of the words of which they are composed. After having reported some lines of a tragedy, he says, "Excellent lines! The sentiments, the expression, the modulation, everything breathes mourning." *Praeclarum carmen! est enim et rebus et verbis et modis lugubre* [*Quest. Tusc.* Bk. 3].[1] This is how we would praise a recitative from one of Lully's operas.

In several passages of his works, Cicero speaks of the plays of Livius Andronicus,[2] Ennius,[3] and Naevius, three poets who lived about two hundred years before him, as examples of a notated declamation from the time they were staged. This notated declamation was still employed at the time he wrote. If this declamation had not been written down, how could it have been preserved for so long? Everyone may judge whether I have made any changes to Cicero's

1 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.46. A translation is found in the immediately preceding sentence. Citation corrected.

2 Lucius Livius Andronicus (ca. 284–ca. 205 BC), Roman playwright of the Old Latin period. He is regarded as the author of the first plays in Latin.

3 Quintus Ennius (ca. 239–ca. 169 BC), Roman poet. Little of his work survives but he had a significant influence on subsequent Latin literature. His adoption of Greek models was particularly important.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_105

meaning. "We have seen," he said, "put on the stage, in place of simple and serious music, pieces by Naevius and Livius Andronicus, an unrestrained music. In order to follow the beat, the actors must become agitated, roll their eyes, loll their heads. In short, they must cavort like madmen." He expresses himself in this manner after having said that Plato was not completely wrong when he held that a country's music cannot be changed without a noticeable change in the customs of the country's inhabitants.[4] *Ego autem nec tam ualde id timendum nec plane contemnendum puto. Illud quidem constat; quae solebant quondam conpleri seueritate iucunda Liuianis et Naeuianis modis, nunc fit ut eadem exululent, cum ceruices oculosque pariter cum modorum flexionibus torqueant* [Cic. *On law*. Bk. 2].[5] We have already seen that the gestures of ancient actors were as subject to the rhythm as the speaking was.

Thus, theatrical declamation began to change in Cicero's time. A century after Cicero, Quintilian already found this declamation full of effeminate and lascivious sounds. After deciding that it is necessary to teach music to children, he adds that he does not mean to say that they should be made to adopt the musical taste that reigned on the stage of his time. Its songs, he continued, are so full of impudence and lasciviousness that they can be accused of contributing a lot to extinguishing the little manly courage that remained. *Non hanc a me praecipi quae nunc in scaenis effeminata et inpudicis modis fracta non ex parte minima si quid in nobis virilis roboris manebat excidit* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 1, ch. 2].[6] All ancients believed that the character of the music generally in use in a certain country had a lot of influence on the manners of its inhabitants. Shall we offer to condemn such a widespread opinion on these matters of fact, facts that were apparent to those who recorded them, when we have an imperfect knowledge of the music of the ancients? I would appeal to science,[7] which our era particularly professes. We can even observe today that, in places where people have different religions, they do not issue from their churches after the service in the same mood. This passing affect even becomes a habit. In some countries people have become Protestant and the sovereign has been obliged to spur the people, by public acts, to adopt the after-Sunday-service amusements in which they freely engaged before religious practices had changed with their change of belief. Let us leave this matter, that will soon become overly serious, and return to our subject.

---

4 A reference to Plato, *Republic* 4.424C.

5 Cicero, *On the Laws* 2.39. The preceding passage paraphrases Cicero.

6 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.31. Quotation corrected. The passage is preceded by a translation.

7 Du Bos actually appeals to "Philosophy," by which he means "natural philosophy," i.e., science.

People who do not know any theatre except French theatre will not, at first, completely understand the meaning of the just cited passage from Quintilian. Though we have seen pieces that are licentious enough, nevertheless we have always seen there a great propriety in tone and in acting. But there are some foreign theatres where, everyday, the actors fall into the vice that Quintilian reports. They imitate all of the tones and accents, without entering into other details, that grip the most passionate people, when they are completely unrestrained.

Reading Horace's *Art of Poetry*, we find an explanation for the defect that Quintilian reproved in the theatre of his day. It came from wanting to make theatre livelier, more affecting, and more expressive, both in respect of the acting and the speaking, than it had previously been. Since Horace wrote after Cicero and before Quintilian, it is interesting to see what he says about changes in theatrical declamation and about the differences between the old and new ways of speaking.

Formerly, said Horace, flutes as loud as our trumpets, and which had to be connected with brass wire,[8] were not used to accompany or support choruses. Only the simplest wind instruments were used in the theatre, whose range was very limited, because they had only a small number of holes.

> *Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco vincta tubaeque*
> *aemula, sed tenuis simplexque foramine pauco*
> *adspirare et adesse choris erat utilis atque.*
> [Horace, *Art Poet.*][9]

But, Horace adds, things have changed a lot. For a start, the tempo has been increased. In order to regulate the tempo, rhythms are used that were not used in the past. This has cost the recitation its old gravity.

> *Accessit numerisque modisque licentia maior.*[10]

Instruments have also been given, Horace continues, a range greater than they previously had. A greater range of declamation was employed, and more tones were used in the spoken parts than was formerly the case. Actors who need to

8 Du Bos apparently refers to the ancient *aulos*. Although 'aulos' is often translated as 'flute,' it was a reed instrument, likely a double reed instrument. Some *auloi* were double. That is, they had two pipes linked together.

9 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 202–204.

10 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 211.

follow the lead of the new instruments, must produce many sounds that they were not previously required to produce, if they want to follow these instruments with tauter strings when they need to. In fact, the more a declamation was sung, the more the faults of those who perform became apparent.

If you will permit me, in order to clarify this passage from Horace, I will make a comparison drawn from church music. St. Ambrose[11] only allowed in chant what is still called Ambrosian chant. It has four modes, which are called *authentic*. This chant was always very serious, but it had less beauty and expressiveness. The harmonic system had fifteen strings, or fifteen keynotes. Four of these notes, namely the highest and the three lowest, were not used in Ambrosian chant. When St. Ambrose composed [*Dict. Of Mus*. by Brossard][12] his music, the Roman theatres were still open and the language spoken there was the language sung in church. It seems that this saint did not want the notes suitable for the theatre and frequently heard there to be heard in church. St. Gregory regulated the chant that we call Gregorian about fifty years [About 500 AD] after the theatres closed. He used eight modes by adding the so-called *plagal* modes to the four that Ambrose used. In this way, the fifteen notes of ancient music entered into Gregorian chant.[13] Everybody found that the beauty of Gregorian chant surpassed that of Ambrosian chant. From the time of our kings of the second dynasty,[14] the churches of Gaul stopped using Ambrosian chant and substituted for it Gregorian chant.

Horace takes the floor. At the same time, actors found themselves under an obligation to quicken their movements and to hurry their speech, since the

11 Aurelius Ambrosius, known in English as St. Ambrose (ca. 340–397), Bishop of Milan. He introduced antiphonal singing into churches. Four of his hymns survive, all of them characterized by a simple dignity.

12 Brossard, *Dictionary of Music* (see n. 4).

13 Here Du Bos gives an inaccurate account of the origins of the eight church music modes. Gregory I, given the epithet 'the Great' (ca. 540–604), pope and saint, is credited in legend with inventing Gregorian chant. In fact, it developed in the 9th and 10th centuries. The authentic modes are the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian. The final note of an authentic mode is always the lowest note of the scale. The plagal modes are the Hypodorian, Hypophrygian, Hypolydian, and Hypomixolydian. The range of a plagal mode extends from the note a fourth below its final note to the note a fifth above the final note. Sometimes the range of a plagal mode was extended to the note a sixth above the final note and to the note a fifth below the final note. Perhaps this helps explain Du Bos' talk about the church modes using all fifteen notes of Roman music. The tradition of Ambrosian chant continues to the present. See Hendrik Van der Werf, *The emergence of Gregorian chant: a comparative study of Ambrosian, Roman, and Gregorian chant* (Rochester, NY: 1983).

14 The Carolingian dynasty. Charles Martel (ca. 686–741) founded the dynasty in 714. Its most famous representative was the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (between 742 and 748–814).

tempo had been accelerated. Thus, their hasty declamation appeared to be a completely new manner of speaking. Finally, the instrumentalist was given a difficult part. He often had to move about the stage so that his playing would be more audible to the actors when he was near them. Thus our theatrical declamation became lively and passionate. The actor who ought to speak more sedately than a person who sensibly reflects on the future, today spouts the sagest maxims with as much agitation as the Oracle of Delphi could display when she issued the oracle while seated on the tripod.

> *Sic priscae motumque et luxuriem addidit arti*
> *tibicen traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem;*
> *sic etiam fidibus voces crevere severis,*
> *et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia praeceps*
> *utiliumque sagax rerum et divina futuri*
> *sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis*.[15]

The hasty gestures of these actors would have seemed convulsive motions to those who were accustomed to smoother and slower speaking. The acting of an Italian player would appear the declamation of a madman to spectators who have only seen English players act. At the beginning, the new manner of speaking will thus have appeared very extraordinary to the Romans. But they will have subsequently become habituated because people are easily accustomed to novelties that inject more action and more passion into theatrical performances.

There are good reasons to believe that the primary cause of the change in theatrical declamation in the time of Cicero came from a change in pronunciation. The Romans for over a century had a lot of interaction with Greece, where they went to study the arts and sciences. The theatre would only have imitated society and copied its model.

Cicero himself informs us that Roman pronunciation of his time was very different from the pronunciation of their ancestors. It became loaded with accents, aspirations, and elisions that imitated the pronunciation of foreigners. This is what Cicero calls a new fashion from abroad. *Peregrinam insolentiam*.[16] "Let us make a judgement about old pronunciation," this author has Crassus say, "on the basis of the manner in which some women still speak today. Since women are less often in society than men are, they are less liable

15 Horace, *Art of Poetry* 214–219. This passage is paraphrased in the preceding passage of Du Bos.

16 Cicero, *Orator* 3.44: "provincial solecism."

than men to make any changes to the pronunciation that they learned in childhood. When I listen to my mother-in-law Laelia speak," continues Crassus, "it seems that I hear the plays of Plautus and Naevius recited. She pronounces smoothly, without emphasis, and without affecting the accents and inflections of foreign languages. Do I not have good reason to believe that Laelia's father pronounced as she does?" *Equidem cum audio socrum meam Laeliam—facilius enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant, quod multorum sermonis expertes ea tenent semper, quae prima didicerunt—sed eam sic audio, ut Plautum mihi aut Naevium videar audire, sono ipso vocis ita recto et simplici est, ut nihil ostentationis aut imitationis adferre videatur; ex quo sic locutum esse eius patrem iudico* [Cic. *Or*. Bk. 3].[17] We have already cited this passage to show that the declamation of plays was not a song, properly speaking, since it was similar to ordinary conversations. Nations can change pronunciation just as they can change language. During the reign of Henry IV, the tone and accent of Gascons was introduced to the Court of France. But the fashion of adopting the one and the other ended with the reign of this prince. He loved the Gascons and preferred them to the rest of his subjects since he was born and raised in Gascony.

It is impossible that the gestures of some people will not become more lively and frequent when the pronunciation of their language has become more vivid and accentuated. This follows from the structure of the human body. *Gestus cum ipsa orationis celeritate crebescit*, said Quintilian [Quint. *Instit*. Bk. 12, ch. 3].[18] In fact, this author, after having praised the precepts concerning gestures that Cicero provides to the orator, adds: We are presently accustomed to seeing very animated gestures. We even, so to speak, demand the most agitated activities from our orators: *Sed iam recepta est actio paulo agitatior et exigitur*.[19]

Pliny the Younger was a student of Quintilian. He writes to one of his friends that he was ashamed to report what he had heard some orators say or to entertain him with the effeminate inflections of which their declamation was full.

17 Cicero, *Orator* 3.45: "For my own part when I hear my wife's mother Laelia—since it is easier for women to keep the old pronunciation unspoiled, as they do not converse with a number of people and so always retain the accents they heard first—well, I listen to her with the feeling that I am listening to Plautus or Naevius: the actual sound of her voice is so unaffected and natural that she seems to introduce no trace of display or affectation; and I consequently infer that that was how her father used to speak." Du Bos omits part of the quotation in his translation.

18 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.111: "Gesture will become more frequent as the delivery becomes faster." Citation corrected.

19 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.184: "Nowadays, however, a somewhat more agitated style of Delivery is regarded as acceptable."

Pudet referre quae quam fracta pronuntiatione dicantur [Plin. *Ep*. 14. Bk. 12].[20] When one tries to put too much expression into a declamation, one must fall into one of two opposite errors. Sometimes it will be too carried away and full of strange elisions. Sometimes the recitation will be too enervated. Pliny also reproaches the declamation that he denounces for sometimes degenerating into screaming. He calls it, *Immodicum insolitumque clamorem*.[21] This author also reports that Domitius Afer,[22] an orator famous in Roman history, who could have begun to litigate about thirty years after the death of Cicero, called the new style of declamation "the perdition of eloquence." *Artificium hoc periit*,[23] he said, after hearing young people plead. But Afer's critique was, perhaps, overstated. At least, it is certain that this orator declaimed in a style entirely opposed to the one that he criticizes here. He spoke gravely and even very slowly. *Cum apud centumviros diceret graviter et lente, hoc enim illi actionis genus erat*,[24] said Pliny, speaking of Afer. My intention in reporting these passages is not to prove that the Romans were wrong to change their manner of declaiming. Rather, it is to show that the Romans really did change and that the change began in Cicero's time.

True, it seems that some people would have been outraged, since moderation is rare in people, and since composers of declamation, instrumentalists, and actors will have competed with each other when it came to being expressive. This always happens with novelties for which the public has a taste. Some artists stay within the bounds that reason prescribes. Others exceed these bounds and produce extravagances.

Music has had in France, over the past eighty years, a fate similar to that of declamation in Rome during the time of Cicero. A hundred and twenty years ago the songs composed in France were, generally speaking, a series of long notes. Musicians sometimes called them *the big note*. The tempo of the performances was very slow. The singers and instrumentalists were not capable of performing difficult music. People did not even dream of composing anything else. Perhaps things had been better in earlier times, but they had degenerated. Those most familiar with our music and its history, whom I have consulted before putting anything on paper, have assured me that the state of our music

20 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.14.9: "I am ashamed to describe the speeches of today, the mincing accents in which they are delivered." Quotation corrected.

21 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.14.9: "an excessive and usual sound."

22 Gnaeus Domitius Afer (d. AD 59), Roman orator and jurist.

23 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.14.12: "This profession is dying."

24 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.14.10: "When Domitius Afer was addressing the Centumviri in his usual impressive and measured tones."

was, one hundred and twenty years ago, just as I have described. Necessity had not even taught them to divide their music into bars. Taste has changed a lot and the progress of our songs has become so rapid that they are sometimes without charm and without expression.

This change has been the occasion of even greater changes in dance, and especially in theatrical dance. Eighty years ago, the tempo of all ballet airs was slow and the music, if it is permitted to use this expression, moved sedately, even at its very gayest.

These airs were performed on lutes, theorboes, and viols mixed with some violins. And the steps and figures of ballets danced to the airs of which I speak were slow and simple. In performing these ballets, dancers could preserve all possible decency in their bearing. Ballet was almost no different from ordinary dancing.

The young Molière had scarcely shown, by two or three airs, that it was possible to do better when Lully appeared and began to compose airs for the ballet that we call quick airs. The dancers who performed the ballets set to this music were required to move with more quickness and vigour than dancers had until then. Consequently, a lot of people say that good taste in dance was corrupted and that it was becoming a burlesque. The dancers themselves did not easily enter into the spirit of the new airs. It often happened that Lully was obliged to choreograph the *entrées* that he wanted danced to the airs of which I speak. He was obliged to choreograph the steps and figures of the *entrée* of the Chaconne of Cadmus because Beauchamps,[25] who then wrote his ballets, did not find the character of this violin air to his taste.

The success of quick airs gave Lully the idea of composing airs both quick and characteristic. Character airs have song and rhythm that imitate the taste of a particular music thought to have been characteristic of certain nations, even of certain mythical peoples of antiquity who, perhaps, never existed. Thus the imagination forms the idea of song and music, suitable to certain persons, according to what can be known of their characters, and the musician prepares for them music of his own invention. We judge the appropriateness of airs on the basis of their agreement with this idea, which may be vague, but nevertheless is approximately the same in all minds. As we have already said, this music is *vraisemblable*, even though imaginary. Though we have never heard Pluto's music, we still find a sort of *vraisemblance* in the airs for the violin to which

25 *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673), a *tragédie en musique* by Lully with a libretto by Quinault. Pierre Beauchamp (or Beauchamps), also known as Charles-Louis Beauchamp (1636–1705), French dancer and choreographer. He worked as a choreographer with Molière's troupe before going on to choreograph several of Lully's operas.

Lully has the entourage of the God of the Underworld dance in *Alceste* Act 4. This is because these airs breathe a tranquil and serious contentment and, as Lully has said, *a veiled joy*. In fact, characteristic airs, by agreeing with figments of our imaginations, are as capable of as many types of expression as other airs. They express the same thing as other airs but in a particular style and in accordance with the *vraisemblance* that we have imagined.

Since the choreographers that Lully used did not improve as quickly as he did, he was often required to write the ballets that went with character airs. Lully, six months before his death, choreographed the ballet for the air to which he wanted the Cyclopes in the entourage of Polyphemus to dance [In the opera *Galatée*].[26] But subsequently, dancers have improved so much that they have surpassed musicians. Sometimes they have imagined and suggested to musicians ideas for violin airs of a new character, and suitable for ballets.

This emulation [by music of dance and dance of music] has given rise to a variety and elegance in ballets and violin airs previously unseen. Sixty years ago, Fauns, Shepherds, Peasants, Cyclopes, and Tritons danced nearly uniformly. Today, dance has several characters. If I am not mistaken, professionals identify up to sixteen. Each of these characters has on stage its own steps, attitudes, and figures. Even women have entered, little by little, into the characters. They are apparent in women's dance as well as in men's.

I will not deny that sometimes our music and dance has been spoiled by the desire to enrich it and make it more expressive. But this is the inevitable fate of all arts that make considerable progress. Some artists always overshoot the goal and disfigure their work by trying to make it elegant. People who stick to the old taste, and who want to prove that the new taste is decadent, usually draw attention to the excesses into which artists fall when they do this. But the public that can distinguish between the faults of the art and the faults of the artist will not hold that new inventions are bad things because they can be abused. Thus, the public is so well accustomed to the new theatrical dance, that today it would find bland the dance style that prevailed sixty years ago. Those who have seen our theatrical dance achieve by degrees the perfection that it has reached are not so struck. But foreigners, who have not been to France for a long time, are very surprised by what seems to them a sudden progress. After this digression, that seems to shed light on a very important, but misunderstood, passage from Horace, let us return to the theatrical declamation of the ancients. What I am about to say concerning how it was performed suffices, by itself, to prove everything that I have presented.

26 *Acis et Galatée* (1686), a *pastorale-héroïque* by Lully. Jean Galbert de Campistron (1656–1723) wrote the libretto, based on the story of Acis and Galatea from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

CHAPTER 11

The Romans Often Staged Theatrical Declamation between Two Actors, during Which One Spoke and the Other Made Gestures.

In many scenes of dramatic works, declamations were often performed with two actors. One was responsible for speaking, and the other for making gestures. How was it possible for these two actors to act in concert? How could they both be synchronized with the accompaniment, if declamation were not devised in such a way that each knew precisely what his partner was supposed to be doing, and in what moment he would execute it? Could that be accomplished if nothing were written down? Let us try to prove it. After having recounted the history of the first theatrical performances that he saw in Rome, which we reported in the previous chapter, Livy adds to his history of Roman theatre the story of how the idea of dividing declamation into two tasks came about, so to speak. He also gives the reasons that caused this practice to become established as the best practice.

Livius Andronicus, a famous poet who lived in Rome about 514 years after its foundation,[1] and about one hundred and twenty years after the theatres opened, acted his own pieces. It was the custom that dramatic poets themselves took to the stage to recite their own works. The people who took the liberty, as they still do in France and Italy, to demand repetitions of passages that pleased them the most, cried out the Latin word '*Bis*!', repeating it for such a long time that poor Andronicus became weary. Unable to declaim any more, he asked that a slave be placed in front of the flautist to recite the lines. While the slave recited, Andronicus made the same gestures that he had made when he was doing the reciting. They noticed that his action was much more animated, because he could employ all his energy to make the gestures when someone else was charged with the care and the difficulty of speaking. From that point on, Livy continued, was born the practice of dividing declamation between two actors, and reciting, so to speak, to the cadence of the actor's gestures. This practice was so widespread that actors only spoke their lines of dialogues. *Livius … idem scilicet—id quod omnes tum erant—suorum carminum actor, dicitur, cum saepius revocatus vocem obtudisset, venia petita puerum ad canendum*

1 240 BC.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_106

ante tibicinem cum statuisset, canticum egisse aliquanto magis vigente motu, quia nihil vocis usus impediebat. Inde ad manum cantari histrionibus coeptum, diverbiaque tantum ipsorum voci relicta [Liv. *Hist*. bk. 7].[2] I believe it would be useless to underscore the weight of Livy's authority, and to bring up all possible reasons why his report cannot be contested. Everyone clearly sees its truth.

The passage I just cited needs no commentary other than a credible explanation of the words '*canticum*' and '*diverbium*.' We find this in Diomedes. After having said that theatrical works were composed of choruses, this ancient grammarian of dialogues and monologues said: "Dialogues are the parts of a work where many people speak together. Canticles or monologues are parts of a work in which an actor speaks on his own, or in which, supposing there is a second actor on stage, the latter does not engage in dialogue with the former, and if it is such that the latter says something or other, he does so only on his own part, that is to say, without addressing the former's words." *Membra comoediarum tria sunt. Diverbium, canticum et chorus. Diverbia sunt partes comoediarum in quibus diversorum personae versantur. In canticis autem una tantum debet esse persona, aut si duae fuerint, ita debent esse ex occulto una audiat et eloquatur, sed secum, si opus fuerit, verba faciat* [*On the Art of Gramm*. Bk. 3].[3] We will reflect that the parts of a dramatic work called 'canticles' by the ancients were usually the most passionate parts, because the actor believed himself to have total freedom to throw himself into the most secret and impetuous sentiments that he had been holding back, or even disguising, in other scenes.

We can have some idea of the chant, or of the harmonious declamation of these canticles, by what Quintilian said of them, even though he only occasionally mentions them. Speaking of Cicero's oration for Milo, which needs to be spoken with emphasis, this author said that this part is somewhat like a canticle. He added, "It is well known that it is impossible to recite it without tossing one's head back a little, as one is led to do by automatic instinct, when saying something with emphasis. The voice flows with greater ease when we hold our head in that position." *Pleniore tamen haec canali fluunt: 'vos, Albani tumuli atque luci.' Iam cantici quiddam habent sensimque resupina sunt* [Quint. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[4] In another place which I have already cited when I wanted to prove that ancient declamation was not a musical song like ours but for the notation, the same author says: "When a child reads poetry, he must read it differently than he reads prose, but he should take care that his voice does not get away from

2 Livy, *History* 7.8–11. The Latin passage is paraphrased above.

3 Diomedes, *The Art of Grammar*, vol. 1. The Latin text is translated above.

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.167: "The stream flows fuller still in: 'Ye hills and groves of Alba.' There is something of a chanting effect in the gradual fall." Latin corrected.

him, as if he were reciting a canticle on stage." *Sit autem in primis lectio virilis et cum sanctitate quadam gravis, et non quidem prorsae similis, quia et carmen est et se poetae canere testantur, non tamen in canticum dissolute* … [Quint. Bk. 3].[5]

Since Livy explained the origin of the practice of his day, I do not wish to confirm his explanation by testimony of other authors, if the matter he explains to us should not appear extraordinary. But since it is guaranteed that some people will find it unfamiliar, I find it appropriate to cite several other passages from ancient authors who said the same thing as Livy.

Valerius Maximus,[6] who was writing during the reign of Tiberius,[7] tells the story of Andronicus using nearly the same words as Livy. In speaking of this poet, he said, "He acted his own work and being frequently recalled by the audience made his voice hoarse, so he brought a boy and a flute player to make music while he silently went through the miming." *Isque sui operis actor, cum saepius a populo revocatus vocem obtudisset, adhibito pueri et tibicinis concentu gesticulationem tacitus peregit* [Valer. Max. Bk. 2, ch. 4].[8]

In speaking of tragic characters in his work on the ancient art of dance, Lucian wrote that from time to time we hear them speaking in iambic verse; while speaking, they need only pay attention to the formation of vocal sounds, since the artists or poets who staged the theatrical works have taken care of the rest. Several lines later, he adds, "Previously it was the same people who recited and gesticulated. But because the activity troubled the freedom of breathing, and thereby impaired pronunciation, they assigned it to others to make the gestures of the chanters who spoke for them" [Lucian. *On Dance*].[9] Aulus Gellius, a contemporary of Lucian, said that the singers in his day who recited without moving about, also performed the gestures when they performed in ancient theatres. *Saltabundi autem canebant, quae nunc stantes canunt* [Aulug. Bk. 20, ch. 2].[10]

---

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.8.2: "The first point is that his reading should be manly and dignified, and display a certain solemnity, not like prose (because this is poetry and the poets claim to 'sing') but not degenerating into sing-song …"

6 Valerius Maximus (who was active ca. AD 14–37), Latin historical writer.

7 Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus (42 BC–AD 16), Roman emperor.

8 Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 2.4. The Latin text is translated in the preceding sentence. Valerius' testimony is not especially weighty, given that he is explicitly paraphrasing Livy throughout this passage and its surrounding context.

9 Lucian, *The Dance* 28–29: "In the past, to be sure, they themselves both danced and sang; but afterwards, since the panting that came of their movement disturbed their singing, it seemed better that others should accompany them with song." Du Bos' translation in the text is rather more laborious than this modern one.

10 Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 20.3.2–3: "Those who now stand and sing formerly danced as they sang." Aulus Gellius (ca. 125–after 180), Latin writer and grammarian.

All of these explanations are strengthened by the testimony of Donatus, who wrote expressly on theatre. "Actors themselves," he said, speaking of Terrence's works, "speak the dialogues themselves, but canticles are chanted, not by the poet, but by a skilled musician." *Diverbia histriones pronunciabant. Cantica vero temperabantur modis non a poeta, sed a perito artis musices facilis* [Donat. *Fragm. on trag. and com.*].[11]

Finally, Isidore of Seville, who at the very least knew people who had seen performances in ancient Roman theatres, mentions the division of declamation between two actors. In speaking of one part of theatre, he says that the poets and those who sang tragedies or comedies positioned themselves in order to recite, while the other actors made the gestures. We can see from the history of Livius Andronicus, reported by Livy, and by many other passages from ancient authors, that poets often sang in their works; that is to say, they themselves spoke the words that their gesticulators did not. *Ibi enim poetae, comoedi et tragoedi, ad certamen conscendebant, iisque canentibus, alii gestus edebant* [*Etym*. Bk. 18, ch. 44].[12] Four lines of an epigram in a Latin anthology give a good description of an actor who makes gestures that go along with what other actors are reciting, after the chorus stopped speaking.

> *Ingressus scenam populam saltator adorat,*
> *Sollerti spondens prodere verba manu.*
> *Nam cum grata chorus diffundit cantica, dulcis*
> *Quae resonat cantor, motibus ipse probat.*[13]

We will explain below why we translate '*saltator*' by 'actor.'

At this point, it is appropriate to make the reader consider three things. One is that ancient theatres were much larger than ours, and accordingly they were less clear. As I will explain in a moment, the daylight could not cast as much light as our theatrical lighting casts across the stages of modern theatres. Consequently, ancients did not see their actors close up, nor as distinctly, as we see

---

11 Donatus, *Fragments on Tragedy and Comedy* 8.9.

12 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 18.44.

13 This epigram is from the *Codex Salmasianus* (*Codex Parisinus Latinus* 10318), which dates to the 8th century. It is so-named for one of its owners, Claude de Saumaise (1588–1653), and contains poems written in Latin uncial in North Africa from the 6th or 7th century AD. This poem is called "*De Pantomimo*:"

> "Standing on the stage the dancer (*saltator*) addresses the people,
> Promising to relate words with a skilled hand,
> For when the chorus pours forth dear songs, he himself
> Approves with sweet movements what the singer resounds."

ours. The second is that ancient actors acted wearing masks, and as a result their mouths and facial muscles could not be seen, whether they were speaking or not. As a result, the audience was unaware of the ridiculousness that we might imagine between two people, one of whom silently gesticulates, while the other recites in a moving tone with his arms crossed. In the third place, since masks helped to augment the actors' vocal power, as I will explain below, these masks must have altered the sound, making it difficult to recognize if, for example, the voice that Micio used in the canticle is the same that he used in the dialogues.[14] It seems that one should choose a singer whose voice resembled, as much as possible, the actor's voice. It was not possible to recognize both voices and distinguish them when they were spoken through the mask. This singer placed himself in a sort of alcove, towards the back of the stage [Isid. *Etym*. Bk. 18].[15]

14 Micio is brother to Demea in Terence's most highly rated play *Adelphoe*, or *The Brothers*. Demea gives one of his sons to Micio to raise and, given their very different parenting styles, end up debating in the end who was the better father.

15 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 18.43–44.

CHAPTER 12

Of the Masks of Ancient Actors.

I think that I need here to make a sort of digression concerning the masks that Greek and Roman actors wore on their heads while acting. This will enable us better to understand the remainder of my discussion of the division of declamation between the actor and the singer. Aeschylus[1] introduced this practice to Greece. Diomedes tells us that Roscius Gallus was the first to wear a mask on the Roman stage. He did so to hide a defect of his eyes, which were cross-eyed, but Diomedes does not report when Rosius lived. *Personis vero uti primus coepit Roscius Gallus, praecipuus histrio, quod oculis perversis erat nec satis decorus in personis nisi parasitus pronuntiabat* [Diomed. Bk. 3].[2] This practice is even preserved in modern theatres: several characters of Italian comedy are masked. Though we have never masked all of our actors as the ancients did, nevertheless it is not long since masks were commonly used in the French theatre in productions of comedies. Sometimes they were even used in the production of tragedies. Though the mask is banished from our tragedies, it is not entirely gone from our comedies.

All ancient actors performed masked and each genre of drama had its own masks. The treatise of Lucian, entitled *The Dance*,[3] is in the form of a dialogue between Solon and Scythius Anacharsis. The latter says to Solon, who began to speak of the utility of tragedies and comedies: "I have seen them performed at the Bacchanalia. In tragedy, the actors are mounted on a type of stilts and they wear masks in which the mouth is an enormous opening. He belts out serious and sententious words. In comedy, the actors are normally shod and dressed and do not shout so loudly, but their masks are even more ridiculous than those of tragedians."

True, the actor appeared to enter as fully as he wanted into the character that he must assume by means of these masks. Ancient actors, those who performed tragedy as well as those who played comedy, had several masks, which they would change. *Maior in personis observatio est apud tragicos comicosque, multis*

1 Aeschylus (ca. 525–ca. 455 BC), Greek playwright. He is regarded as the father of Athenian tragedy.

2 Diomedes, *The Art of Grammar*, vol. 3: "Roscius Gallus, distinguished actor, first began to use the mask since he had crossed eyes and was not seemly enough in characters except as he was performing a parasite." Quotation corrected.

3 Du Bos paraphrases *The Dance* 27.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_107

enim utuntur et variis [Quint. Bk. 11, in prologue].[4] Theatre people believed that a given physiognomy was so essential to the personality of a given character that they thought that, in order to provide a complete knowledge of the character of this person, they needed to give him a type of mask that represented his character. Thus, after the description of each character, that it is customary to put at the top of a script, under the title *dramatis personae*, they placed a picture of his mask. This information seemed necessary to them.

In fact, these masks did not only represent the face. They also represented the entire head, whether compact or large, bald or covered with hair, round or pointed, though the late Perrault believed the contrary. This writer, full of honour and probity, was such a chivalrous man that he would pardon the remark that I have made. The respect that I maintain for his memory leads me to believe that he would have corrected his mistake, if he had been informed of it.

Everyone knows the fable of Phaedra [*Fab*. 7. Bk. 7],[5] in which a fox exclaims, after having examined a tragic mask, "What a visage without any brains!"

> *Quanta species, inquit, cerebrum non habet.*

This is the critique of Perrault: "In Aesop, a monkey finds a head in a sculptor's house and says, 'This is a beautiful head, too bad it lacks a brain.' The joke goes well in the way that Aesop relates it because a head is supposed to have a brain, but it does not work to say it of a mask or a visage, which is not supposed to have one and cannot be criticized for lacking one. Is it good taste to change a fable in this way?" [*Parallel* vol. 3, p. 307].[6] But the masks Phaedra is talking about are similar to the head of Aesop. These masks covered all of an actor's head and they appeared made to have a brain. This is apparent from opening the old manuscript of Terence in the King's Library and even from the edition of Terence by Madame Dacier.[7]

The use of masks prevented audiences from often seeing man withered by age playing the character of an amorous and beloved young man. Hippolytus, Hercules, and Nestor, only appeared on the stage with a head recognizable by

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.1.38: "Tragic and comic poets pay greater attention to characters, because they use many different ones."

5 Aesop, *Fables* 1.7.

6 Perrault, *Parallel of the Ancients and Moderns* 3.307–308.

7 Anne Le Fèvre Dacier, *Les comedies de Terence, traduites en François, avec des remarques* [Terence's comedies, translated into French, with notes] (1683).

its conformity to their known characters. The visage under which the actor appeared always matched his role. An actor never played the role of an honest man with the physiognomy of a complete knave. "Writers of declamation," in Quintilian's words, "when they put a piece on the stage, know how to make even the masks moving."[8] In tragedies, Niobe appears with a sad countenance, and Medea informs us of her character by the atrocious air of her physiognomy. Strength and pride are depicted on the mask of Hercules. The mask of Ajax is the visage of a man not in control of himself. In comedies, masks of servants, slave dealers, and parasites, lowborn people, soldiers, the elderly, courtesans, and female slaves, each has its particular character. From the mask, the austere elder is distinguished from the indulgent elder; wise young people from those who are debauched; a young girl from a dignified woman. Suppose that a father is the principal figure in a comedy and he is sometimes happy and sometimes vexed. He has one smooth brow and one furrowed and takes care to show the spectators the side of his mask that is appropriate in his present situation. Boindin [In a Notice sent to the *Academie des Belles Lettres*][9] explains in this way the final lines of the passage from Quintilian: He supposes that the actor who wears the mask turns one way and then another so that he always displays the side of his face appropriate to his current situation while playing pieces in which he needs to change his mood without being able to change his mask backstage. For example, if this father was happy on the stage, he first presented the side of his mask with the smooth brow. When he changed his mood, he walked across the stage and presented the side of the mask with the furrowed brow. In both situations he took care to always appear in profile. Roman actors paid particular attention to this part of their craft. *Itaque in iis, quae ad scenam componuntur, fabulis artifices pronuntiandi a personis quoque adfectus mutuantur, ut sit Aerope in tragoedia tristis, atrox Medea, attonitus Aiax, truculentus Hercules. In comoediis vero praeter aliam observationem, qua servi, lenones, parasiti, rustici, milites, meretriculae, ancillae, senes austeri ac mites, iuvenes severi ac luxuriosi, matronae, puellae inter se discernuntur, pater ille, cuius praecipuae partes sunt, quia interim concitatus, interim lenis est, altero erecto, altero composito est supercilio; atque id ostendere maxime latus actoribus moris est, quod*

8 Du Bos may be referring to *Institutes of Oratory* 6.1.27: "so to a certain extent the pleas become more effective by being as it were put into their mouths, just as the same voice and delivery of the stage actor produces a greater emotional impact because he speaks behind a mask."

9 Nicolas Boindin, "Discourse sur la forme et la construction du theatre des anciens, Où l'on examine la situation, les proportions, et les usages de toutes ses parties" [Discussion of the form and construction of ancient theatres, in which the scene, the proportions, and the use of all of its parts are examined], *Historie de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1 (1717), 136–153. Nicolas Boindin (1676–1751), French playwright and scholar.

cum iis, quas agunt, partibus congruat [Quint. *Instit.* Bk. 11, ch. 3].[10] Pollux, in the work that we have cited [*Onomasticon*, 4.19],[11] says something that seems to confirm the ingenious and sensible conjecture of which I speak. This author, in speaking of characters' masks, said that the mask of an old man who has the leading role in a comedy must be sorrowful on one side and serene on the other. The same author also spoke of tragic masks that must have specific characteristics. He says that Thamyris, the reckless man that the muses blinded because he dared to defy them, must have one blue eye and one black one.[12]

Ancient masks added a lot of *vraisemblance* to those excellent pieces in which the plot turns on an actor mistaking one person for another. The spectator, who erred in trying to distinguish between two actors whose masks were very similar, readily conceives that the actors themselves are confused. They easily enter into the supposition on which the events of the piece are based, while this supposition has so little *vraisemblance* for us that we have a lot of trouble accepting it. In the performance of two pieces in which Molière and Renard have imitated Plautus [*Amphitrion. The Menechmes.*],[13] we clearly recognize that the characters who are mistaken for each other are different people. How are we to imagine that the other actors, who see them closer-up than we do, can be mistaken? We have the habit of accepting all of the suppositions established by theatrical practice. So we accept those that are at the crux of *Amphitryon* and *Menaechmi*. I would not advise anyone to write a completely new French comedy in which the plot involves a similar error.

---

10 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.73–74: "Therefore in plays composed for the stage, artists in delivery borrow extra emotion from the masks. Thus in tragedy, Aerope is sad, Medea fierce, Ajax mad, Hercules truculent. In comedy, on the other hand—quite apart from the features regularly used to distinguish slaves, pimps, parasites, farmers, soldiers, prostitutes, maidservants, old men (stern or mild), young men (moral or loose-living), married ladies, and young girls—the father who has the principal role has one eyebrow raised and the other not, because he is sometimes angry and sometimes calm, and the actors regularly turn towards the audience that side of the mask which suits the particular part they are playing." Du Bos only translates the latter part of the quoted passage.

11 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.144.

12 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.141. Thamyris is a character in Greek mythology whose story appears in Homer's *Iliad*. He is portrayed as a singer who values his talents to such an extent that he challenges the Muses, boasting that he can sing better than them. In response, they accepted his challenge to compete. Upon losing, the Muses blinded Thamyris and stripped him of his musical talents.

13 *Amphitryon* (1668), a play by Molière based on Plautus's play of the same name. *Menaechmi* was translated by Jean-François Reynard (not Renard as Du Bos says).

Masks also made it easy for the ancients to have men play those female characters whose roles demanded stronger lungs than women usually have, especially when it was necessary to be heard in the vast theatres of Rome. In fact, several passages [*Cic. On Duties*. Bk. 1. Aulug. Bk. 7, ch. 5][14] from ancient writers inform us that the ancients often gave female roles to men. These include an account by Aulus Gellius of the adventures that befell an actor named Polus, who took the part of Electra. Aulus Gellius relates that this Polus performed on the Athenian stage the role of Electra from Sophocles' tragedy.[15] He entered the stage holding an urn that really contained the ashes of one of his children, who had died. This was the passage of the piece in which Electra must appear holding in her hands the urn that she believed to contain ashes of her brother Orestes. Since Polus was excessively touched while apostrophizing to the urn, he similarly touched the audience. Juvenal says [*Ante pedes Domiti longum tu pone Thyestae Syrma vel Antigones vel personam Melanippes*. Juv. *Sat*. 8][16] while inveighing against Nero, that it is necessary to place at the feet of the statues of this emperor masks, thyrsi, and even the robe of Antigone, as a sort of trophy to commemorate the memory of his great actions.[17] This apparently supposes that Nero had performed the role of the sister of Eteocles and Polynices in some tragedy.

Masks also assisted in introducing on to the stage all sorts of foreign nations, with their individual physiognomies. "The mask of a Batavian with red hair, which was the object of your laughter, scares children," says Martial.

> *Russi persona Batavi.*
> *Quae* tu *derides, haec timet ora puer*.[18]

Masks even gave lovers the opportunity to offer compliments to their mistresses. Suetonius informs us that, when Nero mounted the stage to play a god or a hero, he wore a mask based on his face. But when he played some god-

14 Cicero, *On Duties* 1. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 6.5, reference corrected.

15 *Electra* is an undated play by Sophocles. It is set in the aftermath of the Trojan War and recounts the revenge that Electra and her brother Orestes take on their mother, Klytemnestra, who had murdered their father, Agamemnon.

16 Juvenal, *Satires* 8.228–229: "Go on, put your long gown of Thyestes in front of Domitius' feet, or your mask of Antigone or Melanippe."

17 A thyrsus is staff made from the stem of a giant fennel, decorated with vines, leaves, ribbons, and topped with a pinecone. It was carried by Bacchus and his followers and was a symbol of hedonism. Juvenal's point is that Nero's only achievements were theatrical and hedonistic. There is probably also a suggestion that he was effeminate.

18 Martial, *Epigrams* 14.176.2–3. A translation preceded the quoted passage.

dess or heroine, then he wore a mask that resembled the woman he actually loved.[19] *Heroum deorumque, item heroidum ac dearum, personis effectis ad similitudinem oris sui et feminae, prout quamque diligeret*.[20]

Julius Pollux, who wrote his work for the emperor Commodus, assures us that ancient Greek comedy was free to portray and play living citizens [Onom. Bk. 4, ch. 18].[21] The actors who did so wore a mask that resembled the person who was represented in the piece. Thus, Socrates could have seen on the Athenian stage an actor wearing a mask that resembled him, when Aristophanes made the actor play a character with the name 'Socrates' in his comedy, *The Clouds*.[22] This same Pollux give us, in the chapter of his book that I have cited, a very long and interesting account of different features of masks that were used in productions of comedies and tragedies.

But, on the other hand, masks took from spectators the pleasure of seeing passions arise, and of recognizing their various symptoms on the faces of actors. All expressions of human passion affect us a lot, but the signs of passion that appear on the face affect us much more than signs of passion that appear by means of gestures and the voice. *Dominatur autem maxime vultus*, observed Quintilian [Quint. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[23]

However, ancient actors could not make signs of passions apparent on their faces. Only rarely did they remove the mask, and some kinds of actors never did. True, today we allow our actors to conceal half of the signs of passion that can be shown on the face. These signs are alterations of colour as well as alterations affecting the features. For the past twenty years, rouge has been so in style that even men daub themselves before they mount the stage. We are prevented from

19 The emperor Nero had complicated and often very disturbing relationships with his wives (and husband). He was first married to Poppaea Sabina (AD 30–65), who died in AD 65 after being kicked to death by Nero while pregnant. Nero subsequently married Statilia Messalina (ca. AD 35–68), who was his mistress while he was still married to Poppaea Sabina. Statilia Messallina was at the time married to Julius Vestinus Atticus, who was made to commit suicide so that Nero could marry her in AD 66. However, the following year Nero fell in love with a young man named Sporus, who was probably a slave, whom Nero had castrated. Interestingly, Sporus bore a striking resemblance to Statilia Messallina. Nero married Sporus in AD 67, and required Sporus to dress as a woman. At this time, Nero had also taken a husband, marrying another freed slave named Pythagoras.

20 Suetonius, *Nero* 21.3: "representing gods and heroes and even heroines and goddesses, having the masks fashioned in the likeness of his own features or those of the women of whom he chanced to be enamoured."

21 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.143.

22 Aristophanes (ca. 446–386 BC), major ancient Athenian playwright. *The Clouds* (423 BC) contains an unflattering portrait of Socrates as a silly pedant.

23 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.72: "But the face is sovereign."

perceiving changes of colour which, in nature, make a big impression on us. But the mask of ancient actors also hid the features that rouge lets us see.

We could say in defence of using masks that they hide the eyes of the actor from the spectator. True, the passions are made even more apparent from the changes that occur on our faces than from changes to our gestures, our postures, and our tones of voice. But it is also true that the passions are made even more apparent from changes to our eyes, than from what happens in the other parts of our faces. Only our eyes are capable of clearly indicating everything that happens on the face. They make, in a manner of speaking, everything visible, despite the mask. *Animi est omnis actio et imago animi vultus, indices oculi* [Cic. *Orat*. Bk. 3].[24] The imagination replaces, someone will continue, whatever is hidden from us. When we see some eyes full of anger, we think that we see the rest of the face illuminated with the fire of this passion. We are as moved as if we really see it. Several passages from Cicero and Quintilian are proof that ancient actors perfectly expressed all of the signs of passions by the movement of their eyes, assisted and supported by gestures and bearing. We can say the same thing about the Italian actors who act in masks. *In ipso vultu plurimum valent oculi, per quos maxime animus eminet* [Quint. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[25] The soul is depicted on the face and the eyes are the part of the face that, so to speak, speaks to us most intelligibly.

I adopt the simplest opinion. I think that a masked actor cannot express most passions, especially the tender passions, as well as an actor who performs with an uncovered face. The latter can draw on all the means of expressing passion that the masked actor can employ, and he can also display signs of passions on which the other cannot draw. Thus, I believe that the ancients, who had a taste for the theatre, would have abandoned the use of masks for all actors but for one consideration. Their theatres were enormous and without a roof or solid covering. Consequently, actors held that a huge advantage of the mask was that it gave them a means of being heard by all of the spectators, while on the other hand the spectators lost very little. In fact, it was impossible that changes to the countenance, that the mask hid, could be clearly perceived by spectators. Many of them were more than a dozen fathoms from the actor who spoke. Let us consider the explanation that I have just offered.

---

24 Cicero, *Orator* 3.221: "For delivery is wholly the concern of the feelings, and these are mirrored by the face and expressed by the eyes."

25 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.75: "In the face itself, the most important feature is the eyes. The mind shines through especially in these."

Aulus Gellius, who wrote during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, praised the etymology that Gaius Bassus[26] gave for the Latin word *persona*, which means *mask*. Bassus says that it comes from the verb *personare*, which means to resound. In fact, he added, the face and all of the head were enclosed within the mask in such a manner that the voice could only escape through a narrow exit. It follows that the voice, so constrained, made louder and clearer sounds. This is why the Latins gave the name *persona* to masks that amplified and resonated the voices of their wearers. *Lepide mi hercules et scite Gavius Bassus in libris, quos de origine vocabulorum composuit, unde appellata persona sit, interpretatur; a personando enim id vocabulum factum esse coniectat. Nam caput inquit et os coperimento personae tectum undique unaque tantum vocis emittendae via pervium, quoniam non vaga neque diffusa est, set in unum tantummodo exitum collectam coactamque vocem ciet, magis claros canorosque sonitus facit. Quoniam igitur indumentum illud oris clarescere et resonare vocem facit, ob eam causam persona dicta est* [Aul. Gell. *Att. Nights* Bk. 5, ch. 7].[27] Whether Bassus was right or wrong about this etymology makes no difference. For our purposes it is sufficient that Aulus Gellius would neither have praised nor adopted it if in his time masks had not been a kind of echo chamber. Boethius confirms this opinion. *Concavitate ipsa maior necesse est volvatur sonus* [*Marex. De Pers*. Ch. 1].[28] "The concavity of the mask augments the power of the voice," said this philosopher in speaking of masks.

We cannot doubt, after having read the passages from Aulus Gellius and Boethius, who wrote of what they saw everyday, that ancients used masks to amplify the voices of actors. My conjecture is that they placed in the mouth of these masks an insertion that formed a kind of trumpet.

We can see from diagrams of antique masks in ancient manuscripts, on carved stones, on medallions, in the ruins of the Theatre of Marcellus and several other monuments, that the opening of the mouth was excessive. It was a kind of gaping mouth that scared children.

---

26 Gavius or Gabius Bassus, Latin grammarian. His works include *Commentarii* [Commentaries] and *Origine Verborum et Vocabulorum* [On the Origin of Words].

27 Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 5.7: "Cleverly, by Heaven! and wittily, in my opinion, does Gavius Bassus explain the derivation of the word persona, in the work that he composed *On the Origin of Words*; for he suggests that that word is formed from personare. For, he says, the head and the face are shut in on all sides by the covering of the persona, or mask, and only one passage is left for the issue of the voice; and since this opening is neither free nor broad but sends forth the voice after it has been concentrated and forced into one single means of egress, it makes the sound clearer and more resonant. Since then that covering of the face gives clearness and resonance to the voice, it is for that reason called persona."

28 Boethius, *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 3.6. Citation corrected.

Tandemque redit ad pulpita notum
Exodium, cum personae pallentis hiatum
In gremio matris formidat rusticus infans.
[Juv. *Sat.* 3][29]

On the face of it, the ancients would not have tolerated this unpleasantness in masks if they did not derive some advantage from it. I do not see that this advantage could be anything other than convenience in fitting the trumpets that amplified actors' voices.

Moreover, we see from a passage in Quintilian, that laughter was altered so much by the mouth of the mask that it became an unpleasant noise. This author advises orators to examine carefully their natural talents, in order to adopt a style of declamation suitable to their abilities. He says that different qualities can successfully please. He adds that he had seen two famous actors equally applauded, though their manners of declaiming were quite different. But each had followed his own natural path in the manner of performing comedy that he had adopted. One of these actors, Demetrius, whom Juvenal places among the best actors of his time, had a very agreeable loud voice. He was hired to play the roles of divinities, dignified women, indulgent fathers, and lovers. Stratocles, the name of the other actor of whom Juvenal speaks [*Nec tamen Antiochus nec erit mirabilis illic, Aut Stratocles aut cum molli Demetrius Haemo*. Juv. *Sat.* 3],[30] had a raspy voice. He was hired to play austere fathers, parasites, knavish servants, and, in short, all characters who would demand a lot of action. His gestures were lively, his movements were expressive, and he risked doing a lot of things capable of making people hiss at anyone but him. One of the things that Stratocles risked, was laughing, though he was well aware, according to Quintilian, that laughter made an unpleasant sound in the mask. *Illum cursus et agilitas et vel parum conveniens personae risus, quem non ignarus rationis populo dabat* [Quint. *Inst*. Bk. 11, last chapter].[31] Laughter is not in itself displeasing on the comic stage, as we have seen. Molière himself sometimes makes his characters laugh several times. Thus, great peals of redoubled laughter must have resounded in the mouth of the mask, so that it produced an

29 Juvenal, *Satires* 3.174–176: "The familiar farce has at last come back to the wooden stage—when baby bumpkin in his mother's lap cowers in terror at the gaping whitened mask."

30 Juvenal, *Satires* 3.99–100: "And yet in Greece, Antiochus won't be a marvel, and neither will Stratocles or Demetrius along with effeminate Haemus."

31 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.180: "What became Stratocles, on the other hand, was his speed and agility, his laugh (not always in keeping with the character, but a conscious concession to the audience)."

unpleasant sound. This could not have happened if the mouth and the internal parts of the mask close to the mouth, had not been coated with something hard and resonant that altered the natural sound of the voice by amplifying the volume.

I would hazard here a completely new conjecture that makes sense of a passage from Pliny that has been poorly understood until now. My conjecture is that the ancients, after using brass to inlay masks, next employed very thin plates of marble. Pliny says that some unusual stones, that he called *chalcophonos* or brass sounding, are black. According to the etymology of this name, the stone makes a sound resembling that of this metal when it is struck. This is why, he adds, actors are advised to use it. *Chalcophonos nigra est, sed inlisa aeris tinnitum reddit, tragoedis, ut suadent, gestanda* [Plin. Bk. 37, ch. 10].[32] What use could actors have made of a stone with this property, if it was not to inlay part of the mouths of their masks, after the stone had been sawn in very thin slices. Masks made of wood, we learn in the lines that Prudentius wrote against Symmachus, were suitable for receiving this inlay. Those who spoke in tragedies, says our poet, cover their heads with masks of wood and through the opening made in it they make their declamation heard.

> *Ut tragicus cantor ligno tegit ora cavato,*
> *Grande aliquod cuius per hiatum crimen anhelet*.[33]

Solinus, who wrote some time after Pliny, seems to inform us of why this stone was used rather than brass in the interior lining of one part of masks. In resonating with the voice, it does not alter the clarity of the sound. In contrast, the rustling of brass always adds a little inference to the sound that it echoes. After having said that the brass-sounding stone resonates like this metal, he adds that it does not compromise the clarity of the voice, when it is used with care. *Chalcophthongos resonat, ut pulsata æra; pudice habitus servat vocis claritatem* [Solin. Ed. *Salmas*. Ch. 37].[34]

---

32 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 37.154.

33 Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* [Against Symmachus] 2.2.647–648. Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348–ca. 413), Christian, Roman poet, lawyer, and provincial governor. *Contra Symmachum* is an attack on the pagan senator Symmachus, who requested that an altar to the goddess Victory be erected in the Senate.

34 Solinus, *De mirabilibus mundi* [Wonders of the World], ed. Salmasius, ch. 38: "The chalcophthongos resounds just like struck bronze; proper condition preserves the clarity of its ring." Citation and quotation corrected. Gaius Julius Solinus (fl. 3rd century), Latin grammarian. His book *Wonders of the World* is also known as *Polyhistor*. It was a synoptic description of the ancient world, much of it borrowed from Pliny the Elder. Du Bos

We are able to make a judgement about the attention that the ancients paid to everything they judged capable of adding charm or ease of execution to their plays from what Vitruvius says about the manner of placing the *echaea*, or brazen vessels suitable for providing echoes. This author, in speaking of theatre architecture, goes into a great deal of systematic detail concerning the form of these vases, which were apparently only round, slightly concave brass plates, as well as the places where they were placed in order that the voices of actors had *consonant* echoes. *Ita hac ratiocinatione vox a scaena uti ab centro profusa se circumagens tactuque feriens singulorum vasorum cava excitaverit auctam claritatem et concentu convenientem sibi consonantiam* [Vitruv. Bk. 5, ch. 5, etc].[35] Vitruvius tells us that the vases must make different notes. This indicates that the openings and their other dimensions must not be the same. Since these vases were placed at different distances from the actors, it was necessary that they were sounding boards more or less easy to vibrate, so that they act in concert.[36] Vitruvius complains that in his time Romans neglected to emulate the Greeks and place these *echaea* in their theatres. The Greeks were careful about putting them in their theatres. Apparently the Romans profited from the advice of Vitruvius since Pliny complained that these vases, and the vaults in which they were placed, absorbed actors' voices. He claimed that their effect was as deleterious as that of the sand in the orchestra, that is, in the space between the stage and the front row of spectators. *Theatrorum in orchestris scobe aut harena superiacta devoratur, item rudi parietum circumiectu, doliis etiam inanibus* [Plin. Bk. 11, ch. 52].[37] On the other hand, Cassiodorus says in Book 1, Epistle 51, that the voices of those who performed tragedies were amplified by the concavities. They made a sound that one had trouble believing could issue from a human breast. *Tragoedia ex vocis vastitate nominatur, quae concavis repercussionibus roborata talem sonum videtur efficere, ut paene ab homine non credatur exire*.[38]

---

refers to the edition (1629) of Solinus edited by Claudius Salmasius, also known as Claude Saumaise (1588–1653), French classicist.

35 Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 5.5.3: "By this contrivance the voice onstage, poured forth from the stage—as it were, from the center of the theater—and circling outward, strikes the hollows of the individual vessels on contact, stirring up an increased clarity and a harmonic complement to its own tone." Quotation corrected.

36 Here Du Bos summarizes some very technical material from *On Architecture* 5.1–5.

37 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 11.112.270: "It is absorbed by the sawdust or sand that is thrown down on the floor in the theatre orchestras, and similarly in a place surrounded by rough walls, and it is also deadened by empty casks." Citation and quotation corrected.

38 Cassiodorus, *Variae Epistolae* [Various Letters] 4.51.7: "Tragedy owes its name to the impressive voice of the actor: fortified by echo-chambers, it produces such a sound that you would hardly think it issued from a human being." Quotation corrected. Note that Du Bos gives the wrong reference in the text. Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Sena-

These concavities could only be the *echaea* and the trumpet of the mask. We can judge from the care that the ancients devoted to all these matters whether they had neglected to search for inventions adapted to making masks have the effect that, according to Aulus Gellius, made the ancients give them the name *persona*.

If the writers of antiquity could have known that future generations might never be able to explain things that were easy for them, either because they saw them everyday, or because everyone had in their hands books that systematically explained these things, they would have written more informative accounts. But they believed that posterity would always be well informed about the things they described. Consequently, they often did not say more than was needed to support an argument, draw some comparison, explain some circumstance, or give a reason for an etymology. Even those who wrote systematically about poetry, architecture, and several other arts, judged that it was pointless to preface their arguments and doctrines with exact descriptions of things apparent to everyone. So they jumped right in to principles and discussions that their contemporaries found very clear, but which are enigmas to posterity, because the torch that enlightened contemporaries is extinguished. For example, the ancients have not left us a description of the interior of the Coliseum. Consequently, architects are still in doubt about the plan of the third floor of this amphitheatre, though the first two floors are almost intact. For the same reason, many things concerning masks remain to be explained by antiquarians. Perhaps this would not be so if we had not lost the books of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Rufus,[39] and several other ancient writers who wrote about theatres and theatrical productions. At least, they would have informed us about a lot of things of which we are ignorant, even if they did not inform us about everything. A catalogue of these writers whose works are lost is in Part One, Chapter IV of the book that Boulanger, S.J., wrote about ancient theatre.[40]

But we still know enough to grasp that the ancients found masks very useful. They put actors in a position to make themselves heard in open theatres in which a lot of spectators were a dozen fathoms distant from the stage on which the actors spoke. Besides, as we have already said, masks cost the spectators very little, since three quarters of them were not in a position to perceive

---

tor (ca. 490–ca. 585), Roman statesman, historian, grammarian, and monk. He is credited with contributing a great deal to the preservation of the ancient world's knowledge.

39 Dionysius of Halicarnassus (ca. 60–after 7 BC), Greek historian and rhetorician. Rufus, Greek author of a lost work on music that investigated the origins of comedy and tragedy.

40 Du Bos apparently refers to Pierre Brumoy, *Le Theatre des Grecs* [Greek Theatre], vol. 1 (Paris: 1730). Pierre Brumoy (1688–1742), French Jesuit and man of letters.

the passions on the faces of the actors or, at least, not distinctly enough to see them with pleasure. Nevertheless, the age, and other salient characteristics of a character's mask, can be discerned at a distance at which facial expressions cannot. A mask must have been made with horrible grimaces to be visible to spectators more than five or six fathoms from the stage. I will repeat again an observation: ancient actors did not perform, as ours do, under artificial lights that illuminated them from all sides. Rather, they acted in daylight, which must have left a lot of the stage in shadows since the light came almost only from above. Precision of declamation often requires that alteration of the signs of an expression be almost indiscernible. This occurs in situations where an actor must let slip, despite himself, some signs of his passion. We have reason to make our actors perform with uncovered faces and the ancients were not wrong to make theirs wear masks. I return to my subject.

CHAPTER 13

On Acting, or the Art of Gesture, Called 'Hypocritical Music' by Many Authors.

As soon as we take notice of the division of declamation in ancient theatre, we find evidence of it in many books. Previously, we were not aware of this practice. For example, we clearly understand the passage where Suetonius says that Caligula was "so carried away by his passion for singing and dancing that even at the public performances he could not refrain from singing at the top of his lungs with the actor as he delivered his lines, or from making the gestures of the actor, either to praise the gesture or correct it." *Canendi ac saltandi voluptate ita efferebatur, ut ne publicis quidem spectaculis temperaret quominus et tragoedo pronuntianti concineret et gestum histrionis quasi laudans vel corrigens, palam effingeret* [Suet. *in Caio Caes.*].[1] Note that Suetonius, in the language of theatre, uses the words 'to sing' and 'to pronounce' synonymously, and that he also used the word 'dance' and 'make gestures' in the same way. The author has simply used the generic name for the specific. As I have already said, among the ancients, the art of gesture was one of the species of art into which dance was divided. Our dance is a species of what the Greeks called '*órkhēsis*,' and the Romans '*saltatio*.' But since French translators render both words with 'dance,' this equivocation has given rise to many errors. Let us see what we can learn about this topic.

Plato said that the art that the Greeks called '*orchesis*' [Plat. *Laws* Bk. 7][2] consists in imitating all the gestures and movements that can be made by people. Indeed, according to Varro, the word '*saltatio*,' which signifies a leap, does not come from *saltus*, but from the name of an Arcadian named 'Salius,' who was the first to teach that art to the Romans. *Saltatores autem nominatos Varro dicit ab Arcade Salio qui primus docuit Romanos adolescentes nobiles saltare* [Isid. *Etym.* Bk. 18, ch. 50].[3] Varro's testimony cannot be verified by any reasoning

1 Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 4.54. The translation is in the preceding quotation. Caligula, whose Latin name is Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (AD 12–41), Roman emperor. Caligula was murdered by the Praetorian Guard upon his threat to leave Rome for Alexandria, where he hoped to be worshipped as a god. After his death, the Senate attempted to restore the republic, but were thwarted by the military's desire to remain an imperial monarchy. His biography is given in Tacitus, *Annals* 6, and Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*.

2 Plato, *Laws* 7.790e, 796c, 799a–b, 802a.

3 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 18.50. Varro is Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), prolific Roman writer known mainly for *On the Latin Language in 25 Books*.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_108

based on the apparent etymology of the word '*saltatio*.' We should get rid of the prejudice suggested by the name 'saltation,' which leads to the belief that every saltation takes its origin from the word '*saltus*,' which signifies a leap.[4]

We understand that ancient artistic dances, which imitated, for example, the leaping and skipping done by peasants after drinking, or the frantic jumps of Bacchanalians, resemble our dances. In a word, they danced exultantly. But other ancient dances, that imitate actions of people who do not leap, or as we would say, do not dance, is nothing but an imitation of the steps, bodily attitudes, gestures, and, in short, all the actions that ordinarily accompany the speaking part, or which sometimes help them make their sentiments known without speaking. This is how David danced in front of the ark, displaying by his attitude as well as by his gestures and prostrations his profound respect for the guarantee of the alliance between God and the Jewish people.[5] In the seventy-ninth book of Dio, we see that Heliogabalus danced, not only when he saw performances of dramatic works where the emperor usually sat, but also when he walked, when he gave an audience, when he spoke to soldiers, and when he made sacrifices.[6] As strange as Heliogabalus was, he did not dance in our style on those occasions where Dio described the emperor dancing. We should therefore form an idea of the art of *saltatio* as an art comprising not only the art of our dance, but also the art of gesture, or a dance during which one does not, properly speaking, dance at all. What I am about to explain will prove this even further.

According to Athenaeus, Thelestes invented this type of dumb-play, or dancing without leaps or capers, and which we most often refer to here as 'the art

4 Du Bos uses the French word '*sault*' to mean 'leap.' This is an archaic use of the term. By the 17th century, the world '*sault*' came to be used to refer to rapids (from leaps to water falls).

5 2 Samuel 6:1–5 (New Revised Standard Version): "David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. … David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet."

6 See John Hay, *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus* (London: 1911), 115: "with Dividic persistency the Emperor danced, encircling the altars, followed by the Syrians, men and women, who formed his court, while the display and waste of energy was accompanied by the clashing of cymbals and other instruments of music." Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus (203–222), Roman emperor also known as either Heliogabalus or Elagabalus after his death, is described in *Historia Augusta*. His grandmother plotted his assassination, when he was only eighteen. Heliogabalus fell out of favour with the Senate and Praetorian Guard due to his hyper-sexualized behaviour and his failure to respect Roman religion.

of gesture' [*Deipn.* Bk. 1].[7] In doing so, we do not give it the same name as the ancients typically did. They usually called it 'chironomy,' and translating this word literally, it means 'the rule of the hand.'[8]

Since the art of gesture subdivides into several types, we should not be surprised that it was found in many different ancient dances. There were so many that Meursius was motivated to list their names in alphabetical order in a comprehensive dictionary [*Orchest.* J. Meurs.].[9] Of all the musical arts, the one the ancients loved the most, and consequently the one they cultivated the most, was the art of gesture. As such, this art, which taught the actor what to do on stage and also taught the orator how to gesture, was subdivided into several parts, some of which might appeal even to the most serious person.

Anyone who has read ancient works in their original language can recall that they frequently saw the word '*saltatio*' used in contexts in which one could not interpret it as 'dance' in our sense. Nevertheless, I hope that I will not bore anyone by giving evidence of several instances where the ancients used the term 'saltations' when there was no dancing involved.

The authors who made the ancient divisions of music made hypocritical music preside over their dance. This is the same as what Latin speakers sometimes called 'mute music.' We have said that its name comes from hypocritical music, which signifies, according to its proper meaning, a counterfeiter. But this was the usual name that Greeks gave to their actors.

The reader already sees by the little that I have said about this art, that gestures, whose meaning and practice it teaches, are not like those our dancers ordinarily make. The attitudes and movements of our dancers supply a lovely grace. But the gestures of ancient dance need to speak; they need to meaning something. They need, so to speak, to be a continuous discourse. Here is the evidence that I promised.

Apuleius gave us a description of a performance of Paris' judgement, performed by actors using pantomime, who played the role without speaking.

---

7 Athenaeus, *Sophists at Dinner* 1.21f–22a.

8 In ancient Greece, chironomy was the art of moving one's hands while orating or in pantomime. This should not be confused with the ancient practice of transcribing hand gestures to represent musical values on a scale, also called 'chironomy.' It seems to have been invented in ancient Egypt and evidence can be found in surviving hieroglyphics. Each of the depicted hand gestures indicates the relationship between tones and degrees. This practice continued through the medieval period. Today, the art of chironomy is the art of using hand gestures, usually also while holding a small baton, to conduct a symphony orchestra or choir.

9 Johannes Meursius (1579–1639), Dutch classical scholar. Du Bos refers to his *Orchestra, sive, De saltationibus veterum* [Orchestra, or, on ancient dances] (1618).

Thus, the play is called '*saltatio*' [Apul. *Metam*. Bk. 10].[10] When Apuleius speaks of the actors' entrance on stage, he uses the term '*incedere*,' which properly signifies 'to walk.'[11] In another place, to explain that Venus orates with only her eyes, he says that she dances with only her eyes. *Et non numquam saltare solis oculis*.[12] Also, we notice that the ancients never praised the legs and feet of the *saltatores*, or of the dancers. They praised the dancers' arms, and mainly their hands. An epigram in the *Greek Anthology* reproached an actor who danced in the role of Niobe for using no more motion than had he been the rock into which Niobe was metamorphosed: in a word, he did not leave his position and, as a result, he did not make a single dance step. Nothing is more inappropriate for a person who dances in our style than to wear a long robe. But we see that ancient *saltatores* often wore long robes. In speaking of Caligula, Suetonius said that he passionately loved the saltation: "dressed in a cloak and a tunic reaching to his heels, and after dancing a number went off again." *Magno tibiarum et scabellorum crepitu cum palla tunicaque talari prosiluit ac desaltato cantico abiit*.[13] Velleius Paterculus explained that Plancus,[14] one of Mark Anthony's Roman officials, pretended to be Glaucus, a famous fisherman whom the ancients believed to have been metamorphized into Triton[15] when, after going mad after eating some type of herb, he fell into the sea. This historian writes that Plancus, disguised as the god of the sea and walking on his knees, "danced the story of Glaucus." *Caeruleatus et nudus, caputque redimitus arundine et caudam trahens, genibus innixus, Glaucum saltasset* [Bk. *Hist*. 2].[16] A man dancing on his knees would have been a silly spectacle.

In speaking of the need to send children to school to learn the art of saltation, Quintilian's words are enough to convince us that the art of gesture was its principal part. "They should not be ashamed of learning what they are required

10 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.29: "And now the day appointed for the show had come. I was led to the outside wall of the theatre, escorted by crowds in an enthusiastic parade. The opening of the show was given over to actors' mimic dances." The passage to which Du Bos refers contains a lengthy description of the actors and gestures of the pantomime.

11 In fact, Apuleius does not use the word '*incedere*' but rather '*introcessit*', which means 'to go': "*Super has introcessit alia*," ("After these, another girl made her entrance,").

12 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.32.

13 Suetonius, *Caligula* 4.54.2.

14 Lucas Munatius Plancus (87–15 BC), Roman senator and consul.

15 Triton is a Greek god of the sea in ancient Greek mythology. He is the son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, god and goddess of the sea. His job was to send out messages about sea patterns, which he did by loudly blowing a conch shell.

16 Velleius Paterculus, *History* 2.83.2: "at a banquet he played the role of Glaucus, performing a dance in which his naked body was painted blue, his head circled with reeds, at the same time wearing a fish's tail and crawling upon his knees."

to do," said Quintilian. "Moreover, he adds, chironomy, which properly signifies the art of gesture, is an art known since heroic times. The greatest men of Greece, including Socrates himself, also approved of it. Do we not still see from the ancient practice of the dances of the Salian Priests that our old Romans did not scorn this art? Finally, the practice is preserved, uncensored even by us. But I prefer that they leave their teachers at the end of childhood, and that they retain from this exercise only grace and an easy air in their actions." The gestures of the orator should be very different from the gestures of the dancer. *Et certe quod facere oporteat non indignandum est dicere, cum praesertim haec chironomia, quae est* (*ut nomine ipso declaratur*) *lex gestus, et ab illis temporibus heroicis orta sit et a summis Graeciae viris atque ipso etiam Socrate probata … Neque id veteribus Romanis dedecori fuit: argumentum est sacerdotum nomine ac religione durans ad hoc tempus saltatio … Cuius disciplinae usus in nostrum usque aetatem sine reprehensione descendit. A me tamen nec ultra puerilis annos retinebitur nec in his ipsis diu. Neque gestum oratoris componi ad similitudinem saltationis volo, sed subesse aliquid ex hac exercitatione …* [Quint. *Inst.* Bk. 1, ch. 13][17]

Meanwhile, Macrobius preserved a fragment of a diatribe by Scipio Aemilianus,[18] in which the destroyer of Carthage spoke passionately against the difficulties in the schools where the art of gesture is taught: "Our young people, Scipio says, go to acting school to learn to recite, an exercise which our ancestors regarded as a profession for a slave. Moreover, freeborn boys and girls go to schools where they teach the art of saltation. In what company do they find themselves?" *Eunt in ludum histrionum, discunt cantare, quae maiores nostri ingenuis probo ducier voluerunt. Eunt, inquam, in ludum saltatorium inter cinaedos virgines puerique ingenui* [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 3, ch. 3].[19] We can also see

17 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.11.17–19; Latin text corrected. Du Bos' French translation differs from the modern English version considerably: "Nor of course should anyone disdain to learn what he ought to do. Especially as 'chironomy,' which as its name tells us, is the 'law of gesture,' originated in heroic times and was approved by the greatest of the Greeks, including Socrates himself … Nor did the Romans of old think it disgraceful; this is clear from the fact that dance has survived to the present day in the name of a priesthood and in ritual … And the use of this sort of training has persisted uncensored down to our own time. In my practice, however, it will not be kept up beyond the years of boyhood, and even so not for very long. I do not want the orator's gestures to be modelled on the dance; but I do want something of these boyhood exercises to underpin them."

18 Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus (Numantinus) (185–129 BC), Roman general.

19 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.7: "They go to acting school, they learn to sing, things our ancestors wished to be considered disgraceful for freeborn children. They go to dancing school, I say, freeborn maidens and boys, in a crowd of *cinaedus*." This is a notoriously difficult

in Cicero's oration in defense of Murena, whom Cato reproached for being a dancer, that the use of 'saltation' was not tolerated among serious men, unless they were in exceptional circumstances.[20]

Let us return to Quintilian. In another place, this author says that an orator should not speak like an actor, nor should he make gestures like a dancer. *Non comoedum in pronuntiando nec saltatorem in gestu facio* [Quint. Bk. 1, ch. 14].[21] Here is one of his reasons.

The gestures taught by the art called 'saltation' were not always ones that only help to provide gracefulness and, if it is permissible to speak this way, gestures devoid of mean. Rather, often gestures are supposed to mean something intelligible. They are gestures that ought to speak. But the meaningful gestures are of two types, one is natural, the other artificial.

Natural gestures are those which naturally accompany speech, and which help us when speaking. The gesture which, to use a poetic expression, speaks to the eyes, gives the greatest power to speech. At the same time, it animates both the speaker and the hearer. If we prevent a vivacious man from gesticulating when he is speaking, his expression becomes languid, and the fire of his eloquence is extinguished. On the other hand, the orator whom we both see and hear moves us a great deal more than if we only heard his voice but did not see his gestures. But rarely does a natural gesture signify something precisely when it is made without speaking. That only happens in two cases. First, it happens when a natural gesture signifies an affect, such as a headache or the feeling of impatience. Second, a natural gesture signifies something without the help of speech when we recognize the gesture as being the same action that regularly accompanies a particular phrase. Thus, we gather that the person who makes the gesture joins to it the intention to say what he ordinarily would say when he undertakes that action. Since the gestures of people who live south of us are more grandiose than ours, it is much easier to understand their language when we see them gesturing, despite not knowing the words, than to

---

word to translate, and the Loeb translation actually uses 'pansies.' In origin it refers to a dancer, but the main characteristic of a *cinaedus* is a man who desires to be penetrated in sex, commonly used as a slur. Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (Oxford: 1999), has argued the word denotes a man who transgresses normal gender terms. It has no adequate English translation.

20 Cicero, *In defense of Murena* 13: "Cato calls Murena a dancer. Strong language from a forceful prosecution, if there is any truth in it; slanderous abuse, if it is false … Hardly anyone dances except in his cups, either by himself or at any respectable party, unless of course he is out of his mind." Lucius Licinus Murena the Younger (fl. 60 BC) was defended by Cicero against a bribery charge brought by Servius Sulpicius (ca. 106–43 BC), Roman orator.

21 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.12.14 Latin corrected.

understand what our gestures signify in similar circumstances. But these natural gestures have only an imperfect meaning, and very often we misunderstand them.

A man, who wants to express something wordlessly, other than an affect, is obligated to have recourse to body language and artificial gestures that do not draw their meaning from nature, but rather from human convention. Proof that they are only artificial signs is that, like words, they can only be understood in certain countries. The simplest of these gestures has significance only in a certain country, and various signs are used by others to say the same thing. For example, the hand gesture used in France for calling someone is not the same gesture used in Italy for the same purpose. The French make a sign to those whom they want to summon by lifting the right hand, turning the fingers upward, and drawing it multiple times towards their body; to make the same sign, Italians turn their right hand downwards, turning their fingers towards the ground. They do it differently in different countries. Demonstrations and gestures made by a man who does not want to speak, or indeed who cannot speak, are not precisely the same gestures we would use when speaking. Suppose someone who wants to say using signs, but without speaking a single word, 'My father is going to die.' He is required to substitute different, learned signs that he would have used when speaking for those words he does not say. These signs can be called artificial gestures and, in following the spirit of logic, conventional gestures. We know that logic divides all signs into two types: natural signs and conventional signs.[22] Logic tells us that smoke is a natural sign of fire, but the crown is only a conventional sign, an emblem of royalty. The man who beats his breast makes a natural gesture that signifies his distress. He who, by gesturing, describes a forehead encircled by a diadem makes only a conventional sign that signifies a crowned head.[23]

Even though speech is matched to gestures on stage in ordinary performances, the art of gesture is nevertheless taught in the schools as an art that shows how to express oneself without speaking. It is likely that the professors

22 The division of logic into two types of signs was made popular and widely known by the *Port-Royal Grammar*, written by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole. This textbook, which is heavily influenced by Descartes' epistemology, adopted the division of signs into natural and artificial from *On Christian Doctrine* by Augustine. Augustine wrote this work as a guide to the interpretation of signs, mainly scriptural signs. In this treatise, Augustine famously introduced the fundamental distinction between natural and conventional signs into the Latin intellectual tradition, and he is thus regarded as the founder of semiotics.

23 A diadem is an ornamental headband worn by monarchs.

who teach it taught not only all the imaginable ways of being understood with the help of natural gesture, but that they also showed their students how they can reveal their thoughts by using conventional gestures. When speaking, an orator has no need to use artificial gestures to make himself understood. Moreover, it is nearly impossible that many of his gestures would be compatible with the dignity he needs to maintain during his declamation. In my view, this is the reason Quintilian often prohibited his orator to imitate the gestures of dancers or *saltatores*.

What Quintilian says on another occasion seems to completely solidify my position. What Quintilian understands is that, "all the gestures I just mentioned naturally accompany speech. But there is another type of gesture which has meaning only because it describes the thing that someone wants to express by means of it. Such is the gesture representing the action of a doctor who feels the pulse, and thus by this means signifies an illness. Nothing is more vile for an orator," Quintilian adds, "than using gestures of this type in his declamation. The orator's declamation must be entirely different from the dancer's. The orator must match his gestures to the sentiment he expresses, and not with the particular meaning of a word he utters. We also see," our author continues, "that actors who want to act with decency subject themselves observing this rule, that is to say, that they do not, or at least only rarely, use these conventional gestures in their declamation." *Et hi quidem de quibus sum locutus cum ipsis vocibus naturaliter exeunt gestus: alii sunt qui res imitatione significant, ut si agrotum, temptantis venas medici similitudine … ostendas; quod est genus quam longissime in actione fugiendum. Abesse enim plurimum a saltatore debet orator, ut si gestus ad sensus magis quam ad verba accommodatus, quod etiam histrionibus paulo gravioribus facere moris fuit* [Quint. Bk. 10, ch. 3].[24]

Cicero had already said something similar. Cicero really wanted to task a man, who is determined to speak in public, with acquiring the grace and easy airs of Roscius. But he did not want that man to model his gestures on gestures they teach people to do on stage. *Quis neget, opus esse oratori, in hoc oratorio motu statuque, Roscii gestum et venustatem? Tamen nemo suaserit studiosis dicendi adolescentibus, in gestu discendo histrionum more elaborare* [Cic.

24 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.88–89; Latin text corrected. The English translation of the Latin passage is: "the gestures of which I have been speaking all appear to be natural concomitants of words. There are others, however, which express things by mimicry. For example, you can suggest a sick man by imitating a doctor feeling the pulse … You should refrain altogether from such things in pleading. An orator has to be very different from a dancer; he must adapt his gesture to his sense more than to his words—which indeed was the practice of the more serious actors too."

On Orat. Bk. 1].[25] Apparently most actors cannot do what Quintilian calls, *histriones paulo graviores*. Many actors prefer to use conventional, rather than natural, gestures, because conventional gestures seem better suited to making people laugh. They think that these gestures make the action more animated. However, people of good taste disapprove of this practice. Cicero says that what pleases them instead are simple and natural gestures from the actors. Actors are displeasing when they make inept gestures, which sometimes happens. *Nam et palaestrici motus sunt saepe odiosiores, et histrionum non nulli gestus ineptiis non vacant, et in utroque genere quae sunt recta et simplicia, laudantur* [Cic. *On Dut*. 1].[26]

We can find an interesting description of the art of gesture in a letter that Cassiodorus wrote to Albinus, commissioning him to make the people decide whether Theodoros or Halladius was the better actor.[27] It was a question of promoting the most talented of the two. "Our ancestors," Cassiodorus says, "called 'mute music' one of the musical arts that shows one how to speak without opening one's mouth. It expresses everything by gestures, and makes intelligible by movements of the hands and bodily postures what we find difficult to communicate in a continuous speech or a whole page in writing." *Hanc partem musicae disciplinae nominavere mutam maiores, scilicet quae ore clauso manibus loquitur, et quibusdam gesticulationibus facit intelligi quod vix narrante lingua aut scipturae textu possit agnosci* [*Varia. Epist*. Bk. 1, letter 20].[28] I, however, believe that conventional gestures do not always clearly signify what one wants them to say, even though a kind of allusion to the things from which they were derived is observed when they are instituted. *Mimus hallucinatur*, said Apuleius [*Flor*. Bk. 3].[29] We see by what Augustine said about pantomimes that the connection between the gesture and what is signified is not so marked

25 Cicero, *Orator* 1.59.251: "Who would deny that in his movements and carriage the orator must have the bearing and elegance of Roscius? Yet no one will urge young devotees of eloquence to toil like actors at the study of gestures."

26 Cicero, *On Duties* 1.130: "The manners taught in the palaestra, for example, are often rather objectionable, and the gestures of actors on the stage are not always free from affectation; but simple, unaffected manners are commendable in both instances." The palaestra was a training ground attached to the gymnasion that was also used for boxing, wrestling and other physical exercises.

27 Du Bos has 'Henadius,' which Nugent changes to 'Heladius.' They are mentioned by Cassiodorus, *Letters* 1.32 and 1.33.

28 Cassiodorus, *Letters* 1.20. "Our ancestors named this the silent part of musical art, which obviously one says with their hands while their mouth is closed and makes with which gestures I understand can scarcely be understood with a narrating tongue or written text." Latin corrected.

29 Apuleius, *Florida* 4: "The mime rambles."

that it can always be understood by those who have not learned the language of ancient dance without an interpreter.[30]

People from the East still enjoy many dances like the ones described by Cassiodorus. All accounts, and principally those from Persia, speak of these dances. Asian countries are just as liable to political revolutions as are European states; but it seems that Asian countries are less likely to be as liable to moral revolutions as Europe is. In Asia, customs, manners of dress, and all national practices were never liable to so much change as they have been, and still are, in Western Europe.

We see that the ancients indiscriminately called the same person 'dancer' and 'maker of gestures,' because the saltation was the genus, and the art of gesture the species. Hortensius,[31] the orator who was a contemporary and rival of Cicero's, was in his manner and ways of dressing what we call 'a dandy.' After having been an actor for a long time, it was said that he became an actress, a female gesture-maker, whom they called 'Dionysia.' That was the name of a famous female dancer, Aulus Gellius added in his account. *Torquatus … non iam histrionem eum esse diceret, sed gesticulariam Dyonisiamque eum notissimae saltatriculae nomine appellaret* [Aul. Gell. *Att. Nights* Bk. 1, ch. 9].[32] On the other hand, the actions of an actor are also called 'gesticulations,' as we can see in the story told by the poet Andronicus. Not only did they use the word 'to dance' to mean 'to make gestures,' but they also said 'dancer' in place of 'actor.' *Saltare* and *gestum agere* were used so indiscriminately that one could use, 'to dance a dramatic work' to mean 'to recite on stage.' This was not only when speaking about performances of pantomimes, which were acted without opening one's mouth, as we sometimes say, but also in performances of ordi-

30 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 25.38: "For if those signs which the actors make in dancing were of force by nature, and not by the arrangement and agreement of men, the public crier would not in former times have announced to the people of Carthage, while the pantomime was dancing, what it was he meant to express,—a thing still remembered by many old men from whom we have frequently heard it. And we may well believe this, because even now, if anyone who is unaccustomed to such follies goes into the theatre, unless someone tells him what these movements mean, he will give his whole attention to them in vain. Yet all men aim at a certain degree of likeness in their choice of signs, that the signs may as far as possible be like the things they signify. But because one thing may resemble another in many ways, such signs are not always of the same significance among men, except when they have mutually agreed upon them."

31 Quintus Hortensius Hortalus (114–50 BC), Roman orator. On Hortensius' gender transformation and its cultural significance, see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 156–157.

32 Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.5.3: "Torquatus … did not stop with calling Hortensius an actor in the presence of the assembled jurors, but said that he was a posturer and a Dionysia." Latin corrected. Lucius Manlius Torquatus (fl. 65 BC), Roman consul.

nary tragedies and comedies, in which the recitation of verses makes up one part of the performance of the work.

"You write that my songs are being danced now," said Ovid to a friend who sent him *Medea* or some other work by that poet, "to a crowded theatre, my verses applauded, dear friend."

> *Carmina quod pleno saltari nostra theatro.*
> *Versibus et plaudi scribis, amice, meis …*
> [Ovid. *Trist*. 5 *Eleg*. 7][33]

To say that, in the past, the actor who spoke also made gestures, Aulus Gellius said, "Moreover, those who now stand and sing formerly danced as they sang." *Saltabundi autem canebant, quae nunc stantes canunt* [Aul. Gell. Bk. 20, ch. 2].[34]

Juvenal explains to us that the carver at fancy tables danced while he carved. One can carve meat while gesticulating, but not while dancing in our style. Besides, Juvenal adds with a wink, there is something valuable about someone with the skill to carve a chicken or a hare with different gestures suitable for each operation. In Rome, there were special schools to teach this type of *saltation*.

> *Structorem interea, ne qua indignatio desit,*
> *saltantem spectes et chiromunta volanti*
> *cultello, donec peragat dictata magistri*
> *omnia; nec minimo sane discrimine refert*
> *quo gestu lepores et quo gallina secetur*
> [Juven. *Sat*. 5][35]

Finally, Aristides Quintilianus, after having spoken of Cicero's affection for Roscius, who charmed Cicero with his precision for following the tempo and by the elegance of his gestures, called this famous actor a 'dancer.' He called him '*orchestam*' in Greek, which is '*saltatorem*' in Latin. We also see from a passage in Cassiodorus that the Greek word had been latinized. Even though Roscius often spoke on stage, it was nonetheless for his gesturing that Cicero praised

33 Ovid, *Tristia* 5.7.25–26.

34 Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 20.3.2.

35 Juvenal, *Satires* 5.120–124: "Meanwhile, to complete your humiliation, you will watch a carver gyrating and gesticulating with flourishes of his knife, while he performs in full his professors' instructions. Of course, it is a matter of vital importance to carve the hare or chicken with the right gesture."

him nearly every time. When he praised him in his *Speech on Behalf of Archias the Poet*, it was because of his gestures. *Ergo ille corporis motu tantum amorem sibi conciliarat a nobis omnibus*.[36]

Cicero also got into disputes from time to time with Roscius over who could better express the same thought in different ways, with each of the disputants putting their talents to use in the ways in which they individually excelled. Roscius mutely performed the meaning of a sentence that Cicero had written and recited. Afterward, they would judge which of the two had better succeeded in his task. Later, Cicero would change the words or the turn of phrase, without thereby undermining the sense of the discourse. And it happened that Roscius, for his part, conveyed the meaning with different gestures, without weakening his silent performance by means of this change. *Et certe satis constat contendere eum cum ipso histrione solitum, utrum ille saepius eandem sententiam variis gestibus efficeret an ipse per eloquentiae copiam sermone diverso pronuntiaret*, Macrobius said, in speaking of Cicero and Roscius [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 2, ch. 10].[37]

This should suffice for the art of saltation considered in all its breadth. It can be seen from what we have said that the ancients put these lessons into practice during their religious ceremonies, at dinner, and on other occasions. But our subject does not require us to follow all the meanings of 'saltation' used by them. We will speak of theatrical saltation in particular.

36 Cicero, *Speech on Behalf of Archias the Poet* 8.17: "Merely by the motions of his body he had won all our hearts."

37 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.12: "And there's no doubt that he used to compete with the actor himself to see whether the latter could mime a given thought with a variety of gestures in more different ways than he himself could state it with a variety of expressions drawn from his abundant eloquence." Latin corrected.

CHAPTER 14

Of Dance, or Theatrical *Saltation*. How the Actor Who Gestured Could Coordinate with the Actor Who Spoke. Of the Dance of Choruses.

The art of gesture suitable to theatrical declamation was divided into three courses of study. It was subdivided into three different arts [Athen. Bk. 1].[1] The first course of study taught the *emmelia* or gestures suited to tragic declamation. *Cordax* is the collection of gestures suitable for the declamation of comedies, and *sicinis* was the collection of gestures suitable for the recital of dramatic pieces that the ancients called satires. The people who acted in these three poetical genres used the gestures appropriate to each genre.

Nevertheless, Lucian said in *On Dance* that, in performing comic pieces, gestures appropriate to satires were often mixed with the gestures of comedy: the *sicinis* with the *cordax*.

How, someone will ask, were the ancients able to draw up these courses of study in writing, and discover notation and symbols that expressed all of the postures and movements of the body? I cannot say, but the choreography of Feuillet, which I have already mentioned,[2] is enough to show that it was possible. It is not more difficult to learn from a notation the gestures one must make than to learn from notation what steps and what patterns one must dance. This is taught very well by Feuillet's book.

Gesture is not reduced to an art in our culture, and we have not investigated this matter and, consequently, not divided things up as the ancients did. Still, we do not fail to notice that tragedy and comedy have their own appropriate gestures. The actions, postures, mien, and countenance of our actors who perform tragedy are not the same as those who act a comedy. Guided by instinct, our actors make us aware of the principles on which the ancients based a division of the art of theatrical gesture, and divided it into three courses of study. As Cicero said, "nature has given to each passion and each sentiment a facial expression, a sound, and a particular and suitable gesture." *Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a natura habet vultum et sonum et gestum* [Cic. *Orat.*

1 Athenaeus, *Sophists at Dinner* 1.20d–e.

2 See p. 708.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_109

Bk. 3].[3] The passions with which tragedy is most usually concerned are not those with which comedy is most usually concerned.

In the chapter of Quintilian where he speaks in greater detail than elsewhere of the gestures suitable to orators, we discover a lot of things that indicate that, in his time, actors had their schools, where they learned the art of gesture suitable for the stage. Sometimes Quintilian discourages his student from following the teachings of actors on certain matters. Sometimes he refers to them as good teachers. Those who teach the art of the stage, he said, in another passage of the same chapter, hold that a gesture that is made only with the head is a poor gesture. *Solo tamen eo facere gestum scenici quoque doctores vitiosum putaverunt* [Quint. Bk. 10, ch. 3].[4] It seems that even these teachers had what we call 'terms of art.' Quintilian speaks of the countenance an orator must adopt before he opens his mouth, when the eyes of listeners are already turned towards his countenance, even though he has not yet begun to speak. He says that actors call this studied silence, in their manner, 'pauses.' *In hac cunctatione sunt quaedam non indecentes, ut vocant scaenici, morae* [Ibid.].[5]

Since ancient theatre people did not have to use the type of gesture that we have called 'conventional gestures,' in a word, their *saltation* was of a particular sort. Consequently, it was natural that they have separate schools and teachers. Besides, they had to know an art all their own, that is, the art of coordinating their gestures with the speaking of the chanter, who sometimes spoke for them. I will try to explain more clearly than I already have how they did this and how the actions of those who gestured could coordinate with the speaking of those who spoke. I had to wait for my reader to be a little more informed before he read this last explanation. Doing so, I risked being guilty of some repetition.

The reader will remember what we have already said: hypocritical music presided over *saltation*. "For music," wrote Quintilian, "governs the movements of the body as it governs the progression of the voice." *Numeros musice duplices habet in vocibus et in corpore* [*Instit.* Bk. 1, ch. 10].[6] Thus, hypocritical music taught how to follow the metre in gesturing just as metrical music taught to follow it while speaking. Hypocritical music assisted rhythmic music, since the musical arts could not have domains so completely separated that they did

3 Cicero, *Orator* 3.216.

4 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.71. Quotation corrected.

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.158: "In this period of delay, some 'stop-gaps,' as the actors say, are not inappropriate." Quotation corrected.

6 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 1.10.22.

not sometimes find themselves sharing the same lesson. Often one musical art found it necessary to borrow assistance from another. This is already something.

The actor who spoke and the actor who made gestures were thus obliged to follow the same metre. Both had to observe the same time. We have seen in Quintilian [See Book Three, Chapter Two] that people endeavoured to establish a correlation between the gestures and the words spoken by the orator in such a way that his actions were neither too frequent nor widely separated. I think that this idea came from the actor who spoke on the stage being required to speak only a certain number of words while the actor responsible for acting made a certain gesture. The former apparently had to say a large number of words while the second made another gesture. Be that as it may, both constantly followed the time of the same metre, beat by the same man, who had before him the verses that he recited, the syllables of which indicated the time, as we have seen. Above these verses they had noted the gestures that the actor must make, measure by measure. Musical rhythm, said Aristides Quintilianus, regulated gestures as well as the recitation of the verses [Aristides, *Of Music*].

However it was done, we know that the actors in question coordinated well. Seneca reports that people saw with astonishment on the stage skilled actors keep up with the words and, so to speak, join it, despite the speed of the tongue. *Mirari solemus saltandi peritos, quod in omnem significationem rerum et adfectuum parata illorum est manus, et verborum velocitatem gestus adsequitur* [Senec. *Ep*. 121].[7] Certainly, Seneca did not mean to speak here of a man who spoke and gestured at the same time. There is nothing in the least remarkable in seeing his movements go as fast as his speech. It happens naturally. It could be remarkable when one actor speaks and another actor makes the motions.

We also see that an actor whose gestures were out of step was not less booed than one who erred in speaking a verse. *Histrio si paulum se movit extra numerum aut si versus pronuntiatus est syllaba una brevior aut longior, exsibilatur, exploditur* [Cic. *Parad.*].[8] Lucian also said that a gesture out of time was regarded as a serious fault in an actor. This is what gave rise to the Greek proverb, *to commit a solecism with the hand*.

The art of saltation is lost, and it would be reckless to try to guess all of the details of a practice perfected by experience and by the reflections of twenty thousand people. What is certain is that people saw mistakes. True, the custom of attending these spectacles had made the people so perceptive that they

7 Seneca, *Moral letters to Lucilius* 121.6. The passage is paraphrased in the preceding sentence.

8 Cicero, *Paradoxa stoicorum ad M. Brutum* [Stoic paradoxes, addressed to M. Brutus], 26. The passage is paraphrased in the preceding sentence.

even found fault with inflections and false accords when they were repeated too often. People did so even when these accords produced a good effect, when they were managed with art. *Quanto molliores sunt et delicatiores in cantu flexiones et falsae voculae quam certae et severae! Quibus tamen non modo austeri, sed, si saepius fiunt, multitudo ipsa reclamat* [Cic. *Orat*. Bk. 3].[9]

Returning to the art of gesture, one can scarcely doubt that ancient actors excelled in this part of acting. They had a great natural disposition to succeed in it, judging by their compatriots, who are our contemporaries. These actors applied themselves assiduously to their profession, as we shall see. If they made mistakes, or if they were negligent, the spectators who were capable of judging them took care to set them right. Thus Tertullian says that this gesture was as seductive as the speech of the serpent who tempted the first woman. *Ipse caestus colubrina vis est* [Tertull. *Spect*.].[10]

If the critics who intended to criticize or clarify Aristotle's *Poetics* had paid attention to the meaning of '*saltatio*' they would not have found it so strange that ancient choruses *danced* even the saddest passages of tragedies. It is easy to conceive that these dances were only gestures and movements that the members of the choruses made to express their sentiments, whether they spoke, or testified by means of mute acting, how touched they were by the events with which they were concerned. This acting often required choruses to move about the stage. The motions that several people make at the same time cannot be performed without having been coordinated in advance, if one wants to avoid degenerating into a mob. Consequently, the ancients established certain rules for the steps of choruses. These are the regulated motions, so to speak, that have led critics to take the *saltation* of choruses for our type of ballet.

At first choruses had their own teachers who taught them their roles. However, the poet Aeschylus [Athen. Bk. 1],[11] who had closely studied the art of theatrical productions, undertook to teach them himself. It seems that his example was followed by the other poets of Greece.

Thus we must not conceive of the spectacle that these choruses provided on the stages of Athens and Rome in terms of the spectacle that we imagine that we would see in our theatres, if choruses declaimed there. At first we picture the immobile choruses of the opera, mainly composed of people who do not

9 Cicero, *Orator* 3.98. "In singing, how much more delightful and charming are trills and flourishes than notes firmly held! and yet the former meet with protest not only from persons of severe taste but, if used too often, even from the general public." Quotation corrected.

10 Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 18: "Its very movements are the snake's."

11 Athenaeus, *Sophists at Dinner* 1.21e.

even know how to walk and who are made ridiculous by awkwardness in the most touching scenes. We think of choruses of the comic stage, composed of apprentices, and the worst actors, who play poorly their unfamiliar role. But the choruses of ancient tragedies were performed by good, well-trained actors. The expense of presenting them was so great that the Athenians ordered by means of a special law that the authorities pay the costs.

In order to form an accurate idea of these choruses, we must conceive of a large number of excellent actors, responding to a person who addresses them. We imagine the actors in the chorus making gestures and adopting postures suited to what he actually wanted to express, and also appropriate for the particular character that he has depicted. We imagine the old man, the child, the woman, and the young man of these choruses testifying their joy, affliction, or other passions, by signs that are appropriate and adapted to their age and sex. It seems to me that such a spectacle was not the least touching part of a tragedy. Thus we see that one of Aeschylus's choruses [In the tragedy, *The Eumenides*][12] caused several pregnant women to fall into labour in the Athenian theatre. This accident even caused the Athenians to reduce the number of actors in these frightening choruses to fifteen or twenty. Sometimes they had been composed of fifty people. In some passages of new operas, the poet has a main character speak to the chorus, which responds with a few words. These passages have been much enjoyed, though actors in the chorus do not declaim. I am astonished that this imitation of the ancients, if I am permitted a play on words, has not had imitators.

Finally, we have seen choruses that do not speak, and that only imitated the mute acting of the choruses of antique tragedy, succeed on the operatic stage and even give a lot of pleasure, when they were executed with some care. I mean those ballets nearly without dance that are composed of gestures, movements, and in a word, mute acting, that Lully has included in the funeral celebrations of *Psyche*, in that of *Alceste*, in Act 2 of *Theseus*, where the poet introduced the dancing old men, in the ballet of Act 4 of *Atys*, and in the Act 4, Scene 1 of *Isis*, where Quinault has the inhabitants of Hyperborean regions come on stage. The semi-choruses of which I speak, if I may use this expression, provided an engaging spectacle when Lully had them performed by dancers who obeyed him, and did not dare do as little as add a step that he had forbidden, or fail to make a gesture that he wanted, at the time he prescribed. It was easy, when seeing these dances performed, to understand how the metre

12 *The Eumenides* is the third play in the Oresteia trilogy (458 BC). Apparently a chorus featuring the furies was so terrifying that it caused several women to go into labour.

regulated acting in ancient theatres. The man of genius of whom I speak knew by the pure force of his imagination that even the silent action of choruses could contribute to a spectacle's emotional impact. I do not think that this idea came from reading the ancients. Their passages devoted to the dance of choruses were not understood in the manner in which we have explicated them.

Lully paid a lot of attention to the ballets with which we are concerned. To compose them he employed a particular dancing master named d'Olivet.[13] It was him, not des Brosses or Beauchamps[14] that Lully hired for his ordinary ballets such as funeral celebrations in *Psyche* and *Alceste*. Moreover, this d'Olivet wrote the ballet of the old men in *Theseus*, the dreadful dreams of *Atys*, and the shakers of *Isis*. The later consisted entirely of gestures and movements that cold causes people to make. It did not include a single step of our ordinary dance. It is worth noting that these ballets, which pleased audiences at the time, were performed by dancers very inexperienced in the work to which Lully put them. I return to my subject.

13 Hilaire d'Olivet or Dolivet (fl. 1662), French dancer and choreographer; founding member of the Académie Royale de Danse.

14 Anthoine des Brosses, French dancer and choreographer. Pierre Beauchamps (1631–1705), French dancer and choreographer. Louis XIV's *Surintenteant des ballets*.

CHAPTER 15

Observations concerning the Manner in Which Dramatic Works Were Produced in Ancient Theatres. On the Passion That Greeks and Romans Had for Theatre, and on the Study Actors Made of Their Art, and the Pay That They Were Given.

Imagination cannot give us sentiment. Since we have not seen theatrical productions in which one actor recites while another gestures, I believe we would be wrong either to lay decisive praise or blame on the ancient division of declamation. I have already said why it was not as absurd as we thought at first. We remain ignorant of the benefits that the actors' circumstances and talents could bring to this performance. Many northern scholars who, on the basis of hearsay, decided that our opera was nothing but an absurd public spectacle, suitable only for the amusement of children, ended up changing their minds after seeing a few productions. The experience, which in this case was the only thing that could persuade them, convinced them that a mother, crying musically over the loss of her children, was nonetheless a person capable of exciting passion and serious emotion.

Puppet shows, in which declamation is divided, amuse us, even though the action is executed by an automaton. It goes without saying that we are amused by this public show meant for children, because the absurdity of its execution is perfectly aligned with the absurdity of the subject. The *Opera of Bamboches*, created by La Grille and established in Paris around 1674, captivated everyone's attention for two winters.[1] This performance was just an ordinary opera. The only difference was that part of the action was undertaken by a giant puppet, who made gestures on stage that were coordinated with the story sung by a musician, whose voice rang out from an opening in the floor of the stage. In Italy I saw operas performed in this way, and no one found them absurd. There was a famous Cardinal who, when he was still young, put on an opera in this

1 The primary source of information about this opera comes from this very passage in Du Bos. See for example: "Opéra des Bamboches," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et de métiers*, vol. 11 (Paris: 1765), 495, where this passage is simply copied without attribution.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_110

way.[2] It was also very entertaining, because the puppets were nearly four feet tall, approximating human height. Why should we be led to believe that people disliked these public shows? The talented actors, who were already in the practice of acting while masked, performed the part of gesturing that a puppet could do only very poorly.

The actions and writings of the Romans are solid testimony that they were a people of good sense. When Romans created the genre of declamation, where gesture and speech were performed by different actors, they had known the natural manner of recitation, like ours, for more than 120 years. They abandoned this practice, however, for the other, better-notated one.

In addition, the immense expense that Greeks and Romans paid for the performance of these dramatic works gives us a very good sense of the attention they paid to them. Roman theatres had been open for eight centuries after the story of Livius Andronicus. Would eight hundred years of performance not be enough to disabuse the Romans of the practice of dividing declamation between two actors, had this practice been as absurd as we first thought? We must therefore dismiss this initial judgement, as much as intelligent people dismiss those who initially disapprove of the manners and customs of foreign countries.

The performance of three of Sophocles' tragedies cost the Athenians more than the price of the Peloponnesian war. We are aware of the immense sums paid by the Romans to construct theatres, amphitheatres, and public arenas, even in provincial towns. Some of these surviving buildings are the most valuable monuments of ancient architecture. We even admire their fallen ruins. Roman history is filled with facts that prove the people's inordinate passion for public shows. Both emperors and the privately wealthy paid huge sums to amuse themselves with them. I will now speak of the actors' pay. Macrobius [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 2, ch. 10][3] said that Aesopus, a famous tragic actor about whom I have already spoken, a contemporary of Cicero, and, according to Horace and Pliny, a famous spendthrift, left his son five million that he earned as an actor [Hor. *Sat*. Bk. 2, ch. 10. Plin. Bk. 10].[4] We read in Pliny's *History* that

2 Du Bos seems to refer to Cardinal Guilio Respigliosi who wrote the *La Comica del Cielo* [The Divine Comedienne], a puppet theatre opera. It was produced, with music by Anton Maria Abbatini, at Rome in 1668. Pope Clement IX, born Guilio Respigliosi (1600–1669), Pope from 1667 until his death and librettinist.

3 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.14: "As for Aesopus, who was equally skilled, it's well known that he left his son 20,000,000 sesterces."

4 Horace, *Satire* 2.239: "The son of Aesopus took from Metella's ear a wondrous pearl, and meaning, forsooth, to swallow a million at a gulp, steeped it in vinegar. How was he more sane than if had flung that same thing into a running river or sewer?" Pliny, *Natural History* 9.59: "They

the actor Roscius, Cicero's friend, earned five hundred thousand sesterces per year. *Quippe cum iam apud majores nostros Roscius histrio sestertium quingenta millia annuaa meritasse prodatur* [Plin. Bk. 7, ch. 39].[5] Roscius' pay must have increased from the time Pliny saw him, because Macrobius says that our actor was spending a thousand *denarii* per day on himself alone. He shared nothing with his troupe. *Tanta* [*autem*] *fuit gratia* [*ut gloria*], *ut mercedem diurnam de publico mille denarios sine gregalibus solus acceperit* [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 2, ch. 10].[6]

The oration Cicero gave for Roscius supports Pliny's and Macrobius' accounts. The principal point of Roscius' lawsuit had to do with a slave that Fannius entrusted to Roscius' care so that he could teach him comedy. Subsequently, Roscius and Fannius tried to sell the slave and split the profit in two. Cicero denied that this agreement occurred, and he thought that Panurgus, the slave's name, whom Roscius taught, should have belonged entirely to Roscius, because an actors's value far exceeded the value of a slave.[7] As a person, added

---

will not carry off this trophy, and will be robbed even of the record for luxury! A predecessor had done this at Rome in the case of pearls of great value, Clodius, the son of the tragic actor Aesopus, who had left him his heir in a vast estate …"

5 Pliny, *Natural History* 7.39: "This has been exceeded, and considerably, in our time by actors when buying their own freedom by means of their earnings, inasmuch as already in the time of our ancestors the actor Roscius is said to have earned 500,000 sesterces a year." Du Bos converts the sum to "one hundred thousand francs (*cent mille francs*)." A sesterce was a small, silver Roman coin in the Republic and a large bronze coin in the Empire valued at one one-hundredth of an aureus, or gold coin.

6 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.13: "and he achieved such popularity and renown that all by himself, apart from the ordinary members of his troupe, he received 1,000 denarii a day from public funds."

7 This is at best a loose paraphrase taken from Cicero's speech in defense of Roscius on the charge of defrauding Fannius of fifty thousand sesterces in *For Quintus Roscius, Comic Actor* 9: "'Panurgus,' says he, 'was the slave of Fannius, and became the common property of Fannius and Roscius.' At this point Saturius first complained bitterly that Roscius had become joint-possessor for nothing of a slave who had been bought by Fannius and was his private property. Of course Fannius, that generous man, careless about money, overflowing with kindness, made a present of him to Roscius. … You assert, Saturius, that Panurgus was the private property of Fannius. But I contend that he belonged entirely to Roscius. For what part of him belonged to Fannius? His body. What part belonged to Roscius? His training. It was not his personal appearance, but his skill as an actor that was valuable. What belonged to Fannius was not worth more than 4000 sesterces; what belonged to Roscius was worth more than 100,000 sesterces, for no one judged him by his body, but valued him by his skill as a comedian; his limbs, by themselves, could not earn more than twelve *asses*, but the training, which he had received from Roscius, yielded no less than 100,000 sesterces." This complicated lawsuit came about after Panurgus was suddenly murdered, and his value had to be determined.

Cicero, Panurgus would have been worth just thirty *pistoles*,[8] but as a trained student Roscius would be worth twenty thousand *écus*.[9] Whereas Fannius' slave could not earn eighteen *sols* a day,[10] the actor taught by Roscius could earn eighteen *pistoles*. Can you believe, said Cicero in another part of the work, that a man as disinterested as Rocius would try to appropriate, at the cost of his honour, a slave worth thirty *pistoles*? This was someone who worked for twelve years as a comic actor for nothing, and by that generosity he missed out on earning two million. "I could not calculate," Cicero added, "how high a salary Roscius deserves to earn. He deserves at least as much as Dionysia has been given."[11] We have already spoken about that actress.[12] Look at how the Roman Republic paid its theatre people! Macrobius said that Julius Caesar gave twenty thousand *écus* to Laberius to get that poet to play a part in a work he composed [Macr. *Sat*. Bk. 2, ch. 10].[13] We will find many more signs of extravagance under other emperors. Finally, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, who is often called 'Antonius the Philosopher,' ordained that actors who play roles in public shows, which were put on by certain magistrates for the people, cannot earn more than five pieces of gold per performance, and the people responsible for putting on these performances could not give them more than double [*Controversiae*]. These gold pieces were nearly the value of our Louis d'Ors of thirty to a mark, which

8 A *pistole* is originally a Spanish gold coin used in this period and was considered the standard unit against which other currency was evaluated. It was equivalent in Du Bos' day to half of a Louis d'Or, the gold coin currency issued first by Louis XIII. The term transferred into use in France.

9 An *écu* was originally a gold coin issued in France under Louis IX. By 1715, it had become minted in silver, and one *écu* was about 0.917 ounces of silver. It was worth at this time about one-third of a *pistole*.

10 A *sou* or *sol* is a unit of French currency which, at the time Du Bos is writing, worth about 0.05 of a *pistole*.

11 This is another loose paraphrase taken from Cicero's speech in defense of Roscius in *For Quintus Roscius, Comic Actor* 8: "No, even before he became rich, he was always most liberal and generous. Good heavens! A man who refused to make a profit of 300,000 sesterces—for certainly he could and ought to have earned that money if Dionysia can earn 20,000—did employ the greatest fraud, wickedness, and perfidy for the sake of obtaining 50,000 sesterces? The first sum was immense, and honourably acquired, agreeable to gain, his own property; the second was paltry, sordid, distressing, depending on an action and a trial. In the last ten years Roscius could have made 6,000,000 sesterces; he would not."

12 See this Book Three, Chapter Thirteen.

13 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.7: "Thereupon Caesar declared with a laugh: 'Though I'm your fan, Laberius, you were beaten by the Syrian,' and at once he awarded the palm of victory to Publilius and a gold ring with 500,000 sesterces to Laberius."

are currently worth twenty-four *livres*.[14] Livy finished his study of the origin and progress of theatrical performance in Rome by saying that, for a diversion whose accomplishments matter for so little, it had degenerated into one of the most magnificent and sumptuous public shows. Even the richest of the rich had difficulty maintaining the expense. *Quam ab fano initio res in hanc vix opulentis regnis tolerabilem insaniam venerit* [Liv. *Hist*. Bk. 7].[15] Since the Romans themselves had become for the most part declaimers and gesturers, we should not be surprised that they made such a big deal about theatre actors. In the preface to his first work on *Declamations*, Seneca the Elder said that young people of his day made a most serious career in these two arts. *Malarum rerum industria invasit animos. Cantandi saltandique obscena studia effeminatos tenent*.[16]

The bad situation only got worse. Ammianus Marcellinus, who lived under the rule of Constantine the Great, wrote,

> *Quod cum ita sit, paucae domus studiorum seriis cultibus antea celebratae, nunc ludibriis ignaviae torrentes exundant, vocali sonu, perflabili tinnitu fidium resultantes. Denique pro philosopho, cantor, et in locum oratoris, doctor artium ludicrarum accitur, et bibliothecis sephulchroum ritu in perpetuum clausis organa fabricantur hydraulica et lyrae ad speciem carpentorum ingentes, tibiaeque et histrionici gestus instrumenta non levia.*
>
> [Amm. Marcell. *Hist*. Bk. 14][17]

I should alert the reader that, in valuing Roman money against our currency, I have not followed Budé's calculation,[18] even if his calculation was correct

14 A *livre* is a unit of French currency.

15 Livy, *History of Rome* 7.3: "How sober were the beginnings of an art that has nowadays reached a point where opulent kingdoms could hardly support its mad extravagance." Latin text corrected.

16 Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* [Declamations] 1.1.8: "a perseverance in evil that is more shameful than either has seized hold of in their minds. Libidinous delight in song and dance transfixes these effeminates." The *Declamations* were published in ten books and consisted of a series of imaginary legal cases.

17 Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 14.6.18 "In consequence of this state of things, the few houses that were formerly famed for devotion to serious pursuits now teem with the sports of sluggish indolence, re-echoing to the sound of singing and the tinkling of flutes and lyres. In short, in place of the philosopher the singer is called in, and in place of the orator the teacher of stagecraft, and while the libraries are shut up forever like tombs, water-organs are manufactured and lyres as large as carriages, and flutes and instruments heavy for gesticulating actors." Latin corrected.

18 Guillaume Budé (1467–1540), French scholar. Du Bos is referring to a work for which Budé

when that learned man made it. But the amount of silver amounting to twelve francs, in cash value, when Budé wrote, is now worth sixty francs, according to the latest valuation [In 1718]. This is what those who translate or comment on ancient authors need to have in mind. With regard to the amounts of money their author speaks about, pound for pound, the proportion between gold and silver is not the same now as it was during the time of the Roman Republic. Ten ounces of fine silver were equivalent to one ounce of fine gold at that time; today, to buy one ounce of fine gold costs nearly fifteen ounces of fine silver. In many places in Europe today, gold is even more expensive.

In the end, it seems reasonable to me to judge the progress a particular country has made in the arts, which have left not a single surviving monument by which one may make an honest evaluation, by the progress that the same country has made in arts which have surviving monuments. Consider the ancient monuments of poetry, the art of oratory, painting, sculpture, and architecture that survive. We know that the ancients were very skilled in all of these arts, and that they were carried to great perfection. Since we must judge them on their skills in the art of theatrical productions, this judgement can be none other than that they succeeded; and we must give these productions, had we seen them, the same praises we give to their buildings, their statues, and their writings.

Can we not infer a judgement about the merit of their actors from the excellence of ancient poetry? Do we not know from very trustworthy conjectures that these actors, in all likelihood, excelled? Most of them were born slaves, and subsequently they were subjected to an apprenticeship since childhood that lasted as long and as rigorously as their patrons deemed necessary. They were assured of becoming, one day, free, wealthy, and famous, if they developed the skill. In Greece, famous actors had reputations as personalities, and ambassadors and ministers of state were drawn from that profession. Even though Roman laws excluded most theatre people from becoming citizens [Liv. *Hist*. Bk. 24. Aug. *de Civit*. Bk. 2, ch. 11. Arn. *Adv. Gen*. Bk. 7.], there was nonetheless much consideration given to them in Rome, and we can cite many good pieces of evidence for this. The most important of them went about with as much impunity as the eunuchs who perform today in Italy.

Facts tell us that the apprenticeship for those destined for the stage, for those who seemed to have the disposition to succeed, was very long. Following what Cicero tells us, tragic actors practiced for entire years before appearing

---

was well known, *De Asse et Partibus Eius* [The Ace and its Parts], written in 1514. This was a massive and complex work on ancient coins and measures. Budé is best known for his role in founding the Collège de France.

on stage. Part of their apprenticeship consisted in declaiming while seated, so that they would find it easier to declaim while standing on stage. When we become accustomed to doing something with greater difficulty than the ordinary demands of the job, we fulfill these demands better and with much more grace. A man finds his chest at greater ease when standing than when sitting.

This is why gladiators practiced with much heavier arms than those with which they engaged in combat. *Difficiliora enim debent esse quae exercent quo sit levius ipsum illud in quod exercent* [Quint. Bk. 11, ch. 2].[19] The work to which we need to subject ourselves when undergoing an apprenticeship is more difficult than the work for which the apprenticeship prepares us. *Gladiatores gravioribus armis discunt quam pugnant* [Senec. *Controv*. Bk. 4],[20] said Seneca the Elder.

Great actors did not want to speak a single word in the morning until they had, so to speak, warmed up their voices, making them sound bit by bit, so that they would not harm their organs by using them too early and too violently. After working, they rested; and in this position they stretched out their vocal organs, breathing out up to the highest note they used when declaiming, and then successively breathing in using all the other notes, until they reached the lowest note to which they could descend. Notwithstanding the advantage that eloquence achieved in Rome, whatever lustre that a beautiful voice can lend to eloquence, Cicero did not want an orator to make his voice into a slave, as actors had done to theirs. *Me autore, nemo dicendi studiosus, Graecorum morem tragoedorum, voci serviet, qui et annos complures sedentes declamitant, et quotidie antequam pronuncient, vocem cubantes sensim excitant, eamdemque, cum egerent, sedentes ab acutissimo sono usque ad gravissimum sonum recipient …* [Cic. *Orat*. Bk. 1].[21] Nevertheless, it seems that a little after Cicero's death, Seneca the Elder was able to see Roman orators putting into practice the most superstitious practices of actors. In speaking of Porcius Latro,[22] his compatriot orator,

19 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.2.42: "The tasks set for exercise need to be more difficult, so as to make the final object of the exercise easier."

20 Seneca the Elder, *Declamations* 9.4: "Gladiators train on heavier weapons than those used in combat."

21 Cicero, *Orator* 1.59: "No devotee of eloquence will become, by my advice, a slave to his voice, after the manner of the Greek tragedians, who both for many a year practice declamation from their chairs, and every day, before their performance on stage, lie down and gradually raise the voice, and later, after playing their parts, take their seats, and bring it back again from the highest treble to the lowest bass, and in a way regain control of it." The last clause of the sentence is not reproduced by Du Bos, although he compresses the sense by using '*recolliget*' (regain) in place of '*recipient*' (bring it back).

22 Marcus Porcius Latro (d. 4 BC), famous Roman rhetorician.

friend, and classmate, Seneca thus wrote about a very rare thing: Porcius, who was raised in Spain, and was thus accustomed to the sober and laborious life common in the provinces, used not a single remedy to conserve his voice. He did not follow the practice of carefully bringing his voice from the highest to the lowest notes, and then back again. *Nihil vocis causa facere, non illam per gradus paulatim ab imo usque ad summum perducere, non rursus a summa contentione paribus intervallis descendere, non sudorem unctione discutere* [Senec. *Controv*. Bk. 1].[23]

When he spoke of those who were inclined to exhortation, or to reciting things in public, Persius put in place a number of precautions that should be taken, such as gargling with some sort of concoction made for that purpose.

> *Grande aliquid quod pulmo animae praelargus anhelet,*
> *scilicet haec populo pexusque togaque recenti,*
> *… liquido cum plasmate guttur*
> *mobile conlueris.*
> [Pers. *Sat*. 1][24]

Aristotle said the same thing Cicero did about the treatments undertaken by actors and those who sing in choruses to conserve their voices [Arist. *Prob*. Bk. 10].[25] Apuleius explains to us that tragic actors declaim something every day so that their organs do not get rusty, so to speak. *Desuetudo omnibus pigritiam, pigritia veternum parit. Tragoedi adeo ni cottidie proclament, claritudo arteriis obsolescit; igitur identidem boando purgant ravim* [*Flor*. Bk. 2].[26]

The writings of the ancients are filled with facts that prove that their focus on anything that could serve to strengthen, or even improve, the voice went so far

23 Seneca, *Declamations* 1.16: "… without doing anything for the sake of his voice (such as gradually taking it up from low to high, and then going down again from the highest pitch by equal intervals), and without inhibiting sweat by means of oil." Latin corrected.

24 Persius, *Satire* 1.15: "… stuff which only a generous lung of breath can gasp out. And of course that is what you will finally read to the public from your seat on the platform, neatly combed and in your fresh toga, all dressed in white … after you have rinsed your supple throat with a liquid warble."

25 Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 11.22: "Why is the voice ruined in those who shout after meals? Indeed, we can see that all those who train their voices, such as actors and chorus members and the like, perform their exercises in the morning and when fasting."

26 Apuleius, *Florida* 17: "Clearly, just as a sword gleams with use, but grows rusty with disuse, so a voice buried in a sheath of silence grows dull from long inactivity. Disuse always engenders lethargy, and lethargy engenders paralysis. Why, tragic actors have to declaim every day, or else they lose the resonance of their vocal cords, which is why they clear a hoarse throat by constantly declaiming."

as to be superstitious. In Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* 11.13, regarding every kind of eloquence, the ancients engaged in an extensive study of the human voice and of all the ways to strengthen it by using it. The art of teaching how to strengthen and manage the voice became its own particular profession. On several occasions in his history, Pliny indicates that no fewer than twenty plants were suitable for strengthening the voice. This care made up a significant part of [the lives of] all people who speak or recite in public. Here I cite Nero, the actor whom the gods deigned to give the world as its governor. Pliny reports that that emperor came up with a new method to strengthen his voice. It consisted in declaiming at full force while supporting a leaden plate on his chest. *Nero, quoniam ita placuit diis, princeps, lamna pectori inposita sub ea cantica exclamans alendis vocibus demonstravit rationem* [Pliny. Bk. 29].[27] Suetonius also added some curious particulars to Pliny's account. After having spoken of the regime he followed and the remedies he used for maintaining such a beautiful voice, he tells us that Nero, upon returning from his trip to Greece, paid so much attention to his voice that he created many remedies for preserving it. Indeed, in order to save it, when he surveyed his troops, he no longer called each soldier by his own name, which was the Roman practice. Instead, he ordered Roman servants to speak for him whenever he was supposed to raise his voice in order to be heard. *Nec eorum quicquam omittere, quae generis eius artifices vel conservandae vocis causa vel augendae factitarent; sed et plumbeam chartam supinus pectore sustinere et clystere vomitumque purgari et abstinere pomis cibisque officientibus … Ac post haec tantum afuit a remittendo laxandoque studio, ut conservandae vocis gratia neque milites umquam, nisi absens aut alio verba pronuntiante, appallaret* …[28] In every age, a bit of extravagance has been the prerogative of actors. But the extravagance of Nero, and others like him, shows just how valuable are those arts that consider the beauty of the voice when the voice is required.

27 Pliny, *Natural History* 34.50.166–167: "Nero, whom heaven was pleased to make emperor, used to have a plate of lead on his chest when singing songs *fortissimo*, thus showing a method for preserving the voice."

28 Suetonius, *Nero* 20.2, 33.3: "Neglecting none of the exercises which artists of that kind are in the habit of following, to preserve or strengthen their voices. For he used to lie upon his back and hold a leaden plate on his chest, purge himself by the syringe and by vomiting, and deny himself fruits and all foods injurious to the voice … So far from neglecting or relaxing his practice of the art after this, he never addressed the soldiers except by letter or in a speech delivered by another, to save his voice."

CHAPTER 16

Of Pantomimes, or Actors Who Performed without Speaking.

The ancients were not content with having reduced hypocritical music or the art of gesture to a system. They also perfected it to the point where actors dared undertake to perform all sorts of plays without any speaking. These were pantomimes, in which everything was expressed by gestures taught by the art of *saltation*. "Ought Venus to be appeased," asked Arnobius, in a work criticizing pagan superstitions, "since a pantomime has represented Adonis, using gestures taught by the art of dance?" *Obliterabit offensam Venus si Adonis in habitu gestum agree viderit saltatoriis in motibus pantomimum?* [Arnob. *Advers. Nation*. Bk. 7].[1] Without any speech, pantomimes were widely understood. *Histriones totas in theatris fabulas sine verbis saltando plerumque aperiunt et exponunt* [Aug. *On the Teacher*].[2] The actors perform for us and they make us understand an ordinary story without speaking.

In fact, it seems from reading Lucian, that sometimes the subject depicted in a pantomime was chanted [Lucian, *On Dance*]. But several passages that I will cite below prove that a pantomime was often performed without anyone chanting or speaking any lines associated with the mute performance. The name 'pantomime' means imitator of everything. The name was apparently given to this type of actor because they imitated and explored every kind of subject with their gestures. We shall see that sometimes a pantomime did not only play the part of one character, as other actors did. Sometimes he depicted or described the actions of several characters with his actions. For example, sometimes two pantomimes divided the scene with Mercury and Sosia in the comedy *Amphitryon*, with one actor performing Mercury and another Sosia. Sometimes, however, the same actor played both roles, alternately taking the parts of Mercury and Sosia.[3]

1 Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* [Against the Pagans], 7.33. Quotation corrected. Arnobius of Sicca or Arnobius Afer (d. ca. 330), North African Christian apologist. *Adversus Nationes* argued that Diocletian's persecution of Christians was unjustifiable.

2 Augustine, *De Magistro* [On the Teacher] 1.5 is concerned with philosophy of education. A translation follows this passage.

3 *Amphitryon* is a play by Plautus. While Amphitryon has been away at war, Jupiter (disguised

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_111

Above we said that the art of gesture was composed of natural and conventional gestures. It is easy to believe that pantomimes used both kinds since they could not have too many ways of making themselves understood. Also, as St. Augustine said, all of the motions of a pantomime signified something. All of his gestures were sentences, so to speak, but only for those who had the key. *Histriones omnium membrorum motibus dant signa quaedam scientibus et cum oculis eorum quasi fabulantur* [S. Aug. *On Christ. Doc*. Bk. 2].[4]

Pantomimes used several conventional gestures with an arbitrary meaning. Consequently, it was necessary to be familiar with them to understand them and lose nothing of the meaning. In fact, Saint Augustine tells us in the book that I have cited that, "When pantomimes began to be performed on the Carthaginian stage, for a long time it was necessary to have the town crier teach the people in a loud voice the subject that they were performing with their mute acting. Even today, adds this Church Father, there are old men who have told me that they remember having seen this practice employed. Besides, we see that those who were not initiated in the mysteries of these spectacles scarcely understood what the pantomimes meant, at least until the person next to them explained it." *Primis temporibus saltante pantomimo praeco praenumtiaret populo Carthaginis quid saltatory vellet intellegi. Quod adhuc multi meminerunt senes, quorum relatu haec solemus audire. Quod ideo credendum est, quia nunc quoque si quis theatrum talium nugarum imperitus intraverit, nisi ei dicatur ab altero quid illi motus significent, frustra totus intentus est*.[5] But practice taught those who had not systematically studied it how to understand the mute language of pantomimes. This was approximately in the way that one learns all of the words of a foreign language, of which one already knew some terms, when one lives among people who speak this language. The word that one knows helps one guess the meaning of the unknown word, and that in turn enables one to guess the meaning of another word. When one is aware of this language, the gestures that one knew enabled one to guess new gestures that the pantomimes invented, so it would appear, from time to time. In turn, these gestures assisted in guessing even more new gestures.

---

as Amphitryon) has been having sex with Amphitryon's wife. At one point, as part of some machination's designed to protect Jupiter, Mercury disguises himself as Amphitryon's slave Sosia. This would make it easier for a single actor to play both roles.

4 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.3 "Actors with motions of every limb give signs which almost speak to those knowing through their eyes."

5 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.97.

The poem by Sidonius Apollinaris called *Narbonne* is addressed to Consentius,[6] a citizen of that town. This poem shows that several pantomimes performed their pieces without speaking a single word. Sidonius says this to his friend: "When, after having finished your business, you go to relax at the theatre, all of the actors tremble before you. It seems to them that they had to perform in front of Apollo and the nine muses. You immediately grasped what Caramalus and Phabaton were performing, without them speaking a single word. They made themselves understood by a speaking gesture, so to speak, and sometimes expressed themselves by a motion of the head, the hand, or another movement of the body. You knew immediately that it was Jason, Thyestes, or some other character that they intended to represent."

Coram te Caramallus aut Phabaton
Clausis faucibus et loquente gestu,
Nutu, crure, genu, manu, rotatu, etc.
[Sidon. *Car.* 23, verse 268][7]

Caramalus and Phabaton were, as we learn from Father Sirmond's notes on Sidonius [Sirm. notes to Sidon. p. 157],[8] two famous pantomimes. They are mentioned in the letters of Aristaenetus and by Leontius the Scholastic.[9] Sidonius's commentator also provides an anonymous ancient epigram on this subject:

Tot linguae quot membra viro, mirabilis est ars,
Quae facit articulos, ore silente, loqui.[10]

All of a pantomime's body parts are as many tongues, by means of which he speaks without opening his mouth.

---

6 Publius Consentius (fl. 5th century), Latin grammarian. Narbonne is a town in south of France. It was known as Narbo in ancient times.

7 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* 23.268:
In your presence a Caramallus or a Phabaton,
with his closed lips and his action that speaks through
nod, leg, knee, hand, and spin.

8 Jacques Sirmond (ed.), Notes to Sidon. *C. Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii Arvernorum Episcopi, Opera* (Paris: 1614). Jacques Sirmond (1559–1651), French scholar and Jesuit. He edited editions of many medieval writers.

9 Aristaenetus (fl. 5th or 6th century AD), Greek epistolographer. Two books of his letters survive. Leonitus of Jerusalem, also known as Leonitus Scholasticus (the Schoolman) (ca. 485–543), Byzantine theologian.

10 *Anthologia Latina* 100.9–10 "The man has as many tongues as limbs, his skill is wondrous, which makes the joints speak while his mouth is silent."

It is easy to imagine how pantomimes could intelligibly describe an action and make understood words such as 'heaven,' 'earth,' 'a man,' etc., taken in their literal senses, and even verbs referring to actions or the emotions. But, someone will ask, how could they make people understand words, taken in a figurative sense, which are so frequent in poetical style? I will respond first that the meaning of the sentence sometimes conveys awareness of words taken in a figurative sense.

Second, Macrobius [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 2, ch. 7][11] gives us an idea of the way in which pantomimes proceeded when they had to express one of these [figurative] words. He reports that Hylas, the student and competitor of Pylades,[12] as we shall see, inventor of the art of pantomimes, performed in his way a monologue that ended with the words 'Agamemnon the Great.' In order to express these words, Hylas made all of the gestures of a person who wants to measure another, taller, man. Pylades called to him from the pit, saying, "My friend, your Agamemnon is a tall man, but he is not a great man."[13] The people immediately wanted Pylades to perform the same role. Augustus, during whose reign this event occurred, preferred that the people be masters in the theatre than in Campus Martius.[14] Thus, the people obeyed and when Pylades had performed the passage that he had so haughtily taken from his student, he depicted by his gesture, and the attitude of his countenance, a man plunged into deep meditation, in order to express the character of a great man. It was not difficult to grasp from this that he wanted to say that a man greater than others was a man who could think more deeply than them. The competition between Pylades and Bathyllus, another pantomime, was so great that Augustus, who was sometimes troubled by their disputes, thought he should speak to Pylades about the competition. Augustus exhorted him to live peacefully with his competitor, who was protected by Maecaenas. Pylades [Dion. lib. 54][15] was pleased to respond

11 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.7.18: "Since Pylades was said to have changed the old style of dancing that had had its heyday with our ancestors and to have introduced a new and charming style, he was asked by Augustus what contribution he had made to dance and answered, 'the sound of pipes and the din of men.'"

12 Pylades and Bathyllus, who is mentioned below, were considered the greatest pantomimes during the age of Augustus in ancient Rome. They were great innovators and introduced erotic dance into the art of pantomime. Bathyllus was a comic actor, Pylades performed tragedies. Hylas was one of their many students.

13 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.7.13.

14 Augustus erected buildings for political meetings on the Campus Martius (Field of Mars). This was a way of securing political power and establishing himself as the first Roman emperor. The Campus Martius was primarily used for army training.

15 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 54.17.4–5.

that the best thing for the Emperor would be that the people were concerned with Bathyllus and Pylades. It is easy to believe that Augustus did not deign to reply to this answer.

Let us speak of the characters in pantomimes. The author of a treatise criticizing ancient spectacles, that we have in the works of St. Cyprian, defines a pantomime in these terms: "a monster that is neither man nor woman, with all the most lascivious manners of any courtesan, whose art consists in speaking with his gestures. However," he adds, "the whole town hurries to see him perform with gestures the vulgar indecencies of old fables." *Huic dedecori condignum dedecus superducitur, homo fractus omnibus membris et vir ultra muliebrem mollitiem dissolutus, cui ars sit verba minibus expedire: et propter unum nescio quem nec virum nec faeminam, commovetur civitas, un defaltentur fabulosae antiquintatis libidines*.[16] The Romans must have thought that the operation made on pantomimes, that made them eunuchs, enabled them to retain a suppleness of body that men could not have. This idea or, if you like, this whim, made them subject children destined for profession to the same cruelty that is still practiced in some countries on children when they do not want their voices to mature.[17] St. Cyprian, in the letter that he wrote to Donatus giving an account of his motives for converting to Christianity, says that spectacles that are a part of the pagan cult are full of infamy and barbarity. After having mentioned the horrors of the amphitheatre, he added, speaking of pantomimes, "that it deprives males of their manhood in order to make them more suited to a dishonest profession. The master who can best make a man resemble a woman is regarded as having produced the best student." *Evirantur mares, omnis honor et vigor sexus, evirati corporis dedecore mollitur. Plus quam illis placet quisquam virum in faeminam magis fregerit*.[18] "Why," asked Tertullian in his treatise against spectacles, "is a pantomime obliged to undergo bodily suffering in order to become an actor?" *Quam denique pantomimus a pueritia patitur ex corpore, ut artifex esse possit*.[19]

In fact, according to Lucian [Lucian, *In Orch.*],[20] nothing was more difficult than finding a good specimen to make into a pantomime. After having spoken of the size, suppleness, lightness, and ear, that he ought to have, he adds that it is most difficult to find a face both soft and majestic. Then this actor needs to

16 Cyprian, *On Public Shows* 1.6. Quotation corrected.

17 In 18th-century Italy, thousands of boys were castrated to satisfy the desire for opera and church singers.

18 Cyprian, *Epistle* 1 (To Donatus). Quotation corrected.

19 Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 17.2. Quotation corrected.

20 Lucian, *On Dance* 67–68.

be taught music, history, and I do not know how many other things capable of making whoever learns them deserve the name of an educated person.

We read in Zosimus and Suidas [Zoz. *Hist*. Bk. 1][21] that the art of pantomime was born in Rome during the reign of Augustus. This is what makes Lucian say that Socrates had seen dance only in its infancy [Lucian, *De Orch*.].[22] Zosimus even counted the art of pantomime as one of the causes of the corruption of the mores of the Roman people and the misfortunes of the empire. *Octaviani temporibus pantomimorum saltatio prius incognita in usu esse coeperit, Pylade ac Bathyllo primis eius auctoribus, et praeterea quaedam alia, quae multis huc usque malis causam praebuerunt*.[23] In fact, as we shall see, the Romans became crazy about this kind of show.

The first two teachers of the new art, Pylades and Bathyllus, made their names as famous in Roman history, and as famous as the name of the founder of any institution whatsoever can be in modern history. Pylades' collection of gestures was drawn from the three collections of gestures of which I have already spoken, and which were used in tragedy, comedy, and the dramas that the ancients called satires [Athen. *Deipn*. 1].[24] Pylades called the art specific to pantomimes *italic*. Thus, since the time of Pylades, there are four collections of gestures suitable to the theatre: The *emmelia*, used in acting tragedy; the *cordax*, used in comedy; the *sicinis*, used in satire; and the *italic*, used in pieces performed by pantomimes. Kalliakis the Cretan, who died in about 1708 [*De Ludis Scenicis*, ch. 9 and 10],[25] Professor of Belles-Lettres at the University of Padua, alleged that the art of the pantomimes was older than Augustus, but failed to prove his case. This author takes for the art of pantomime, which consists in performing a piece or a full scene without speaking, what Livy calls *imitandorum carminum actum* [Liv. *Hist*. 7].[26] This art, which was certainly older than Augustus, was the art of expressing passions by improvised dance.

Below we shall mention a passage from Seneca the Elder, who could have seen Pylades and Bathyllus. He says that Pylades was much better than Bathyl-

21 Zosimus, *New History* 1.

22 Lucian, *On Dance* 25.

23 Zosimus, *New History* 1.6. Quotation corrected. "The pantomimes' dance, previously unknown, began in use in the times of Octavian, its first inventors Pylades and Bathyllus, and in addition to certain others which have offered the cause for many evils still present."

24 Athenaseus, *Sophists at Dinner* 1.20d–e.

25 Nicholas Kalliakis (ca. 1645–1707), Cretan philosopher and scholar. He worked at Rome and Venice before becoming Professor of Belles-Lettres, Philosophy, and Rhetoric at the University of Padua in 1677. His main work on dance in the ancient world is *De Ludis Scenicis Mimorum, et Pantomimorum* [The Games of Imitation and Pantomime] (Padua, 1713).

26 Livy, *History of Rome* 7.2: "imitating the action of the singers." Quotation corrected.

lus when it came to tragic subjects, but that Bathyllus was much better than Pylades in comedies. Athenaeus gives the same account of these two pantomimes. We find the same report in a large number of ancient writers.

To say that pantomimes performed a piece, the Romans said *fabulam saltabant*,[27] but we have already explained this. They used in these performances a particular style of flute that they called *tibia dactilica* [Poll. *Onom*. 4.10].[28] Apparently, the sound of this flute imitated the human voice better than others and in the manner that our transverse flute does. It was more suited to playing the subject, that is, in my view, the notated music of the verse, or the declamation that was to be recited in ordinary productions. We see from a passage of Cassiodorus cited above [Cassio *Epist*. 4.51][29] that the *dactilica* flute was supported by other instruments, which apparently functioned as the basso continuo to its melody.

What seems surprising is that the actors who undertook to perform these pieces without speaking, could not use facial movements in their declamation. Permit me to speak this way. They had to use a fixed expression since they always acted in masks, as did other actors. Lucian says in *On Dance* that a pantomime mask did not have a gaping mouth, as ordinary masks did, and it was a lot more pleasant. Macrobius reports that Pylades became angry one day while playing the role of mad Hercules when the spectators found fault with his over the top gestures. He removed his mask and shouted at them, "Madmen though you are, I am performing the role of a greater madman than you." Macrobius [Macrob. *Saturn*. Bk. 2, ch. 7][30] also reports in the same passage other witticisms of this famous founder of pantomimes.

It is believed that these actors began by performing, in their manner, scenes from tragedies and comedies that are called *cantica*. I base this conjecture on two reasons. The first is that ancient writers who lived before Apuleius do not speak, as far as I can remember, of dramatic pieces performed by a troupe of pantomimes. They only mention monologues or *cantica danced* by these mute actors. We also see in Lucian's above-mentioned book that a foreigner, who saw five costumes prepared for a single pantomime who successively took five different roles, asked if the same person wore all five. It seems that he would not have been in a position to pose this question if one saw troupes of pantomimes. The second reason is that probably things must have happened like

27 "They danced the story."
28 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.82: "dactylic flute."
29 Cassiodorus, *Letters* 4.51.7.
30 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.7.

this: It was necessary that the first pantomimes, in order to please the spectators, make themselves understood. The actors, in order to be easily understood, would have begun by mutely performing the most beautiful scenes of the best-known dramas. If pantomimes were established in Paris, we can only imagine that they would begin by mutely performing the beautiful scenes from *El Cid* and the other best-known pieces. They would choose those in which the plot requires the actor to assume several striking attitudes, and make several easily identified gestures that can be easily recognized when they are seen but the usual accompanying words are not heard. They would begin, for example, by performing the scene that happens between Mercury and Sosie in Act I of *Amphitryon*. If pantomimes wished to perform scenes from our opera, they would begin by performing the last scene of Act IV of *Roland*, where the hero becomes mad.[31]

Perhaps the first full troupes of pantomimes were formed in Lucian's time. Apuleius, who could have seen Lucian, gives an exact report of a performance of the *Judgement of Paris* by a troupe of pantomimes [Apul. *Met.* Bk. 10].[32] In this interesting story Juno, Athena, and Venus spoke one after the other to Paris and promised him what everyone knows,[33] expressing themselves by gestures and by signs coordinated with the accompanying instruments. Apuleius remarks several times that they made themselves understood by gestures, *nutibus* or *gestibus*. Apuleius wrote, in speaking of Juno: *haec puella varios modulos Iastia concinente tibia procedens quieta et inaffectata gesticulatione nutibus honestis pastori pollicetur, si sibi praemium decoris addixisset, et sese regnum totius Asiae tributuram*. Of Minerva he says: *haec inquieto capite et oculis in aspectum minacibus, citato et intorto genere gesticulationis alacer demonstrabat Paridi, si sibi formae victoriam tradidisset, fortem tropaeisque bellorum*. And as for Venus: *sensim annutante capite coepit incedere, mollique tibiarum sono debeatis respondere gestibus et nunc mite conniventibus, nunc acre comminantibus gestire pupillis et nonnunquam saltare solis oculis. Haec ut primum ante*

31 *Roland* (1685) is opera by Lully, with a libretto by Quinault. The plot is adapted from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

32 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.

33 In the Greek myth, Paris (son of the King of Troy) is asked to judge whether Hera (Juno), Aphrodite (Venus), or Athena (Minerva) is the most beautiful. Each of the goddesses offers a bribe: Hera offers to make him king of Europe and Asia; Athena offers wisdom and war craft; Aphrodite offers him the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, wife of the Spartan King Menelaus. Paris decided in favour of Aphrodite, thus sparking the Trojan War.

iudicis conspectum facta est, nisu brachiorum polliceri videbatur, etc.[34] Each goddess also had her own group of followers, composed of several actors.

Since pantomimes were exempted from saying anything, and since they only used gestures, it is easy to imagine that all of their movements were livelier and their actions a lot more animated than those of ordinary actors. In dialogues the latter could only give to gesturing part of their attention and strength because they spoke themselves. They were obliged in monologues, in which they were not speaking, to make their mute acting fall in step with the recitation of the one who spoke for them. On the contrary, the pantomime was entirely master of his actions and his only concern was to make intelligible what he wanted to express. Thus, Cassiodorus calls pantomimes men whose hands have, so to speak, a tongue at the end of each finger; men who spoke while remaining silent, and who knew how to form an entire narrative without opening their mouths. In short, men that Polyhymnia, the muse who presided over music, had created in order to show that words were not necessary to make her thoughts understood. Cassiodorus explains himself in these terms in a letter, written on behalf of Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths, to Symmachus, Prefect of Rome, ordering him to repair the Theatre of Pompey at Theodoric's expense. Cassiodorus, after having spoken of the tragedies and comedies performed in this theatre, added: *Orchestarum loquacissimae manus, linguosi digiti, silentium clamosum, exposito tactia, quam musa Polymnia repperisse narratur, ostendens homines posse et sine oris affatu suum velle declarare* [*Variae, Epistles*, 4.51].[35]

If we can believe Martial and some other poets, pantomimes made a huge impression on spectators. Everyone knows the lines of Juvenal:

> *Chironomon Ledam molli saltante Bathyllo*
> *Tuccia, etc.*[36]

---

34 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.31–32. Quotation corrected. "This virgin Juno in the Ionian manner sounded a flute which she bare in hand, and moved herself quickly and with unaffected gait towards the shepherd Paris, showing by honest signs and tokens and promising that he should be Lord of all Asia … This maiden began to dance and shake her head, throwing her fierce and terrible eyes upon Paris, and promising that if it pleased him to give her the victory of beauty, she would make him by her protection the most strong and victorious man alive … As soon as she was come before the judge, she made a sign and token that if he would prefer her above the residue of the goddesses, she would give him the fairest spouse of all the world and one like to herself in every part."

35 Cassiodorus, *Letters* 4.51.8. Quotation corrected.

36 Juvenal, *Satires* 2.6.63–64:

> When sinuous Bathyllus is dancing his pantomimic
> Leda.

But we cannot cite most of these passages, even in Latin. Besides, poets are suspected of exaggeration.[37] Thus, we will content ourselves with citing prose writers.

Seneca the Elder, who practiced one of the most serious professions of his time, confessed that his taste for productions of pantomimes was a real passion. "To indicate my enthusiasm," he wrote, "Pylades was no longer the same actor in comedy nor Bathyllus in tragedy." When Seneca wrote this passage, he spoke of the difficulty of succeeding in several professions. *Ut ad meum te morbum uocem, Pylades in comoedia, Bathyllus in tragoedia multum a se aberant* [Senec. *In Controv*. 2].[38] Lucian said that people cried at productions of pantomimes, just as they did at other plays.

The art of pantomime would have had more difficulty succeeding among the northern nations of Europe. The natural body language of northerners is not as powerfully eloquent nor marked enough to be easily deciphered when they are seen without an understanding of the key that should naturally accompany it. The copy is always less animated than the original.[39] But, as we have already observed, conversations of all types are more full of eye-catching gestures, if it is permitted to use this expression, in Italy than in other countries.[40] A Roman who wants to leaves off his serious studies, and gives free rein to his natural vivacity, gestures abundantly. He produces a lot of motions that mean almost as much as entire sentences. His actions make a lot of things intelligible that our actions could never indicate. His gestures are also marked in that they are easy to recognize when we review them. A Roman who wants to tell a secret about an important matter to his friend is not satisfied with being out of earshot. He also takes the precaution of being out of sight since he believes, with good reason, that his gestures and facial movements will enable someone to guess what he will say.

One will note that the same vivacity of mind, and the same vivid imagination that naturally produces animated, varied, expressive, and individuated gestures, is also able easily to understand meanings of the gestures of others. We easily understand a language that we speak. The language of the Grand Signor's[41] mutes, is understood by their compatriots without difficulty, and seems

37 The passages cannot be cited because they are so vulgar. In this period, it was sometimes acceptable to cite vulgar passages, if they were in Latin rather than in the vernacular.

38 Seneca the Elder, *Declamations* 3.1.10: "To call your attention to my own pet failing: Pylades in comedy, Bathyllus in tragedy are quite unlike their normal selves." Quotation corrected.

39 Here Du Bos refers back to a doctrine presented in Book One, Chapter Three.

40 See Book One, Chapter Forty-two.

41 The European name for the Turkish Sultan. Ottoman Sign Language (or Seraglio Sign Lan-

to them to be a clearly articulated language. But it would only be a confused gesticulating to the people of Northern Europe. Let us join to these remarks the commonplace reflection that some nations are naturally more sensitive than other nations. We will then have no difficulty understanding that speechless actors could greatly touch the Greeks and Romans whose natural body language they imitated.

I put forward as a kind of proof of my thesis a book by an Italian author, Giovanni Bonifaccio, entitled *L'Arte de' Cenni*[42] or the art of expressing ourselves by signs. We do not find, on reading this book, that its author knew that ancient pantomimes made themselves understood without speaking, however this seemed possible to him. This made him compose a quarto volume of more than six hundred pages, divided into two parts. In part one he teaches the method of saying whatever you like with signs and gestures. In the second, he demonstrates the utility of this mute language. It was published in Venice in 1616.

I return to ancient authors who speak of the success of performances by pantomimes.

Lucian [Lucian, *On Dance*] declares himself a zealous partisan of the art of pantomime and it is obvious that he took pleasure in reporting facts that could bring honour to this art. Among other things, he says that a cynic philosopher regarded the art of these mute actors as childish badinage, and he defined it as a collection of gestures that the music and stage properties made passable. But a pantomime at the court of Nero, by way of showing that this philosopher was wrong, performed before him in mute acting and without accompaniment, the amours of Mars and Venus. The cynic was obliged to agree that the art of pantomime was a real art. Lucian also reported that a king from the Black Sea region, who found himself in Rome during the reign of Nero, asked with great alacrity that Nero give him a pantomime he had seen to be his interpreter of all languages. This man, the king said, will make everyone understand him. Now I am obliged to pay I do not know how many interpreters in order to communicate with my neighbours, who speak a variety of languages that I do not understand.[43]

---

guage) was widely used by servants at the Ottoman court in Constantinople during the 16th and 17th centuries. This language is now completely lost.

42 Giovanni Bonifaccio, *L'Arte de Cenni con la Quale Formando si Favella Visibile* (Venice: 1616). Giovanni Bonifaccio or Bonifacio (1547–1635), Venetian writer, jurist, and historian.

43 Lucian, *On Dance* 64: "I wish to tell the remark of a barbarian concerning the same dancer, which may be considered a very great tribute to his art. One of the barbarians from Pontus, a man of royal blood, came to Nero on some business or other, and among other entertainments saw that dancer perform so vividly that although he could not follow what was

We are as little capable of judging the merits of the art of pantomime as we are of judging the merit of dividing a performance between two actors. We have not seen them perform. Nevertheless, it seems that people who enjoy Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and especially those who have seen old Ottavio, old Scaramouche, and their companions Harlequin and Trivelin, are persuaded that several scenes can be performed well without speaking.[44] But we can advance facts that will prove better than reasoning that this sort of performance is possible. Troupes of pantomimes have been formed in England and some of the actors have even performed in Paris mute scenes that everyone understood on the stage of the Comic Opera. Though Roger did not open his mouth, people understood what he meant.[45] What was Roger's training in comparison to that of the ancient pantomimes? Roger only knew that he was never taught by a Pylades or a Bathyllus.

About twenty years ago, a princess[46] who combined a lot of natural spirit, a lot of learning, and a great taste for spectacles, wanted to see an essay on the art of ancient pantomime that could give her a clearer idea of these performances than she had formed from reading. Lacking actors instructed in the art of which we speak, she chose a male dancer and a female dancer who were both superior geniuses in their profession and, in short, capable of creativity. They were made to perform in gestures, in the theatre of Sceaux, the scene from Act 4 of Corneille's *Horatii* in which young Horatius kills his sister Camilla.

---

being sung—he was but half Hellenised, as it happened—he understood everything. So when it came time for him to go back to his own country, Nero, in saying good-bye, urged him to ask for anything that he wanted, and promised to give it to him. 'If you give me the dancer,' said he, 'you will please me mightily!' When Nero asked, 'What good would he be to you there?', he replied, 'I have barbarian neighbours who do not speak the same language, and it is not easy to keep supplied with interpreters for them. If I am in want of one, therefore, this man will interpret everything for be by signs.' So deeply had he been impressed by that disclosure of the distinctness and lucidity of the mimicry of the dance."

44 Commedia dell'arte is form of comic theatre that originated in Italy in the 16th century. It is characterized by a set of masked, stock characters who represents various social classes. These stock characters include Scaramouche or Scaramuccia (a clownish servant), Ottavio (who belongs to the class of *innamorati* or lovers), Harlequin (a comic servant), and Trivelin or Trivelino (a stupid servant).

45 Pantomimes were performed in Paris from 1729 on and Roger was one of the actors. An English troupe of pantomimes, led by a man named Delamain, performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1739. See, Nathalie Rizzoni, "Le Geste eloquent: la pantomime en France au XVIII siècle," in *Musique et Geste en France de Lully à la Révolution*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Berne: 2009), 129–148.

46 Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon, Duchess of Maine (1676–1753), a royal princess married to the Duke of Maine and an avid patron of the arts. The Chateux de Sceaux was one of the Duke's properties.

They performed it accompanied by several instruments that played a composition composed by an able man [Mouret][47] as if he were setting the words of the scene to music. Our two novice pantomimes played off each other so well by means of their gestures and movements, without any written-out dance steps, that they saw tears shed. There is no question but that they touched the spectators. We also know that the Chinese still have today actors who, like pantomimes, perform without speaking and that the Chinese like these actors a lot. Are not Persian dances pantomime scenes?[48]

It is certain that the art of pantomime charmed Romans from the beginning, that it soon spread to provinces of the Empire furthest from the capital, and that it lasted as long as the Empire. The history of the Roman emperors more often mentions famous pantomimes than celebrated orators. The Romans were enamoured of spectacles, as is apparent from Plutarch's *On Music*. "All those who apply themselves to music, are most pleased by the theatre." For the Romans preferred the productions of pantomimes to those of other actors.

We have seen that this art began in the reign of Augustus. It pleased this emperor a lot and Bathyllus enchanted Maecenas. From the first years of Tiberius' reign, the Senate was obliged to pass a law barring Senators from frequenting the schools of pantomimes and Roman knights from being part of their entourages in the streets. There was a reason this law was passed, said Tacitus. *Ne domos pantomimorum senator introiret, ne egredientis in publicum equites Romani cingerent* [Tacit. *Ann*. 1].[49]

Some years later, it was necessary to chase the pantomimes from Rome [Ibid., 1]. The extreme passion that the people had for their productions gave rise to the formation of cabals that supported one or another, and the cabals became factions. We even see, in a letter written by Cassiodorus [*Various*. Bk. 1, ch. 20][50] that pantomimes adopted different uniforms, in imitation of those who drove chariots in the circus racetracks. Some were called Blues, others Greens, and so on. The people were divided into camps, and all of the circus factions, which are often mentioned in the history of Rome, would espouse

47 Jean-Joseph Mouret (1682–1738), French composer. The Duchess of Maine was his patroness, and she appointed him *Surintendant de la musique* at Sceaux ca. 1708. His music is rarely played today, but his Fanfare-Rondeau became famous as the theme music of Masterpiece Theatre.

48 Du Bos apparently has in mind Chinese arts such as Beijing opera which can involve wordless drama. Several genres of Persian dance exist, but some of them wordlessly tell stories and resemble pantomimes.

49 Tacitus, *Annals* 1.77: "that no senator was to enter the houses of the pantomimes; that, if they came out into public, Roman knights were not allowed to gather round."

50 Cassiodorus, *Letters* 1.20.

troupes of pantomimes.[51] These factions sometimes would degenerate into parties as hostile to one another as the Guelphs and Ghibellines could have been under the German emperors.[52] It was necessary to have recourse to an expedient that was sad, but necessary, for a government that only sought means to amuse the people, by providing them with bread, and giving them spectacles: they banished the pantomimes from Rome.

Seneca [the Younger], the tutor of Nero, complained that several schools, that carried the name of the philosophers whose systems they taught, would be destroyed and the names of their founders forgotten. He then added, the memory of no famous pantomime was extinguished. The schools of Pylades and Bathyllus remain, always directed by their students, the succession of which is still uninterrupted. The city of Rome abounds in instructors who teach this art, and who do not lack students. They find theatres in every house. Husbands and wives argue about which pantomimes will give them the highest status. *At quanta cura laboratur, ne cuius pantomimi nomen intercidat. Stat per successores Pyladis et Bathylli domus; harum atrium multi discipuli sunt multique doctores. Privatum urbe tota sonat pulpitum* [...]. *Mares inter se uxoresque contendunt, uter det latus mollius* [*Nat. Ques*. 7.32].[53]

The affected equivocation found in the last words of this passage is explained by what Tertullian said about the unrestrained passion that men and women had for pantomimes. *Quibus viri animas, feminae autem illis etiam corpora sua substernunt* [Tertull. *On Spect*.].[54] To this can be added what Galen said in his *Prognostics*: he was called to see a wealthy woman suffering from an extraordinary illness.[55] He discovered from the changes that occurred in the disease, when they spoke of a certain pantomime in front of her, that her illness came solely from the passion she had formed for him and the efforts she made to hide the passion.

---

51 Four teams entered chariots in races at the Roman circus: the Red, White, Green, and Blue teams. Each team developed a passionate following, and the competing factions would often come to blows.

52 Between the 12th and 14th centuries the Holy Roman Emperors (Germans) engaged in a power struggle with the Pope for dominance in Italy. In Northern Italy, the Guelphs were the party of the Popes; Ghibellines were the party of the emperors. The two parties engaged in bitter internecine strife.

53 Seneca the Younger, *Natural Questions* 7.32.3. Quotation corrected.

54 Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 22: "most loving of men, to whom men surrender their souls and women their bodies as well."

55 Aelius Galenus (129–ca. 215), Greek medical practitioner and philosopher whose writings remained authoritative through to the early modern period.

Pantomimes were also chased from Rome during the reign of Nero and during the reigns of other emperors. But, as I have already said, their exile did not last long because the people could no longer do without them, and because they served the purposes of the sovereign. The sovereign believed that he needed the favour of the multitude and sought to do things that made him popular. For example, Domitian had them chased away and Nerva,[56] his successor, had them recalled, though he was one of the wisest emperors. We also see that the people, tired of disorders to which pantomimes gave rise, sometimes themselves demanded their expulsion with as much enthusiasm as they would demand their return another time. *Neque enim a te minore concentu, ut tolleres pantomimos, quam a patre tuo, ut restitueret, exactum est*, said Pliny the Younger in speaking of Trajan.[57]

Some modern authors have believed that Nero chased all actors from Rome. This is because Tacitus, in reporting the expulsion of pantomimes, used a general term that is used to denote all of those who act in the theatre. Nero chased from Italy all actors, said Tacitus, as the only means of preventing the disturbances born in the theatre. *Non aliud remedium repertum est quam ut histriones Italia pellerentur* [Tacit. *Ann*. Bk. 13].[58] But it can be proved that it was only the pantomimes who were chased out. Tacitus, with negligence excusable in such a matter, put the name of the genre for the name of one of its species. The first reason is that Tacitus, immediately after the words that I have just cited, adds a fact that clearly proves that Nero had not closed the theatres. He ordered, says this historian, that soldiers mount a guard at the theatre, as they had previously done. Some time earlier, Nero had removed the guard in order to appear more popular. *Milesque theatro rursum adsideret*.[59] The second reason is that Tacitus, in speaking of the return of actors, calls them pantomimes. *Redditi quamquam scaenae pantomimi certaminibus sacris prohibebantur.*[60]

56 Marcus Cocceius Nerva Caesar Augustus (30–98), reigned 96–98. Ancient historians considered him a prudent emperor.

57 Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus Traiani* [In praise of Trajan] 46. This work is an oration to the Roman Senate in praise of the emperor Trajan.

58 Tacitus, *Annals* 13.25: "No other cure appeared but to expel the actors from Italy and to have the soldiers again take their place in the theatre."

59 Tacitus, *Annals* 13.25: "and to have soldiers again take their place in the theatre." Quotation corrected.

60 Tacitus, *Annals* 14.21: "since the pantomime actors, though restored to the stage, were debarred from the sacred contests."

CHAPTER 17

When the Sumptuous Performances of the Ancients Ceased. Of the Excellence of Their Chanting.

The art of pantomime, that of the actors who knew how to divide declamation into two tasks, the art of those who notated declamation, in short, the various arts in the category of the science of music, all perished. It appears that they did so when the sumptuous performances, that had put on stage most of these musical arts, ceased at the theatre of Marcellus and several other vast theatres capable of holding several thousand spectators. Precisely when were these magnificent theatres abandoned, whose size was the occasion for all of the innovations in the art of dramatic performance of which I have spoken? I answer as follows.

We see clearly from the works of St. Augustine, who died in 430 AD, that in his time theatres were closed in most cities of the Roman Empire. The barbarian invasions, that spread throughout the empire, deprived people of the unfortunate provinces of the means to support the expense of these performances. *Nisi forte hinc sunt tempora mala*, *quia per omnes paene civitates cadunt theatra* [*On the Harm*. Bk. 1, ch. 33],[1] wrote this Father, in speaking of the present situation of the state. But, on the other hand, the *Letters* of Cassidorus, which we have already cited, and which were written in about 520 AD, indicate that the Roman theatres were still open a full century after the time of which Augustine speaks. Either the big theatres of this capital had not closed, or they had reopened. Apparently they were permanently closed when Rome was sacked and destroyed by Totila [In 546].[2] This sack was, in every respect, crueller than the preceding ones. Patrician women were made to beg at the doors of their own homes, of which barbarians were masters. It was the true moment when arts and letters were almost entirely annihilated. At least, though they were continuously cultivated, they did not bear much fruit. The great artists had long since disappeared, but it was only in this period that the arts themselves disappeared. All the fresh disasters that closely followed on Totila's sack of Rome would desiccate, so to speak, the plants that he had uprooted.

1 Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* [On the Harmony of the Evangelists] 33.50 "Except by chance the times are bad, since the theaters are falling throughout nearly all states."

2 Totila, originally known as Baduila, (d. 552), Ostrogoth King who reigned from 541 until his death. He successfully led his armies against the forces of the Eastern Roman Empire in Italy.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_112

Such was the fate of ancient theatre in the Western Empire. Some people are born more industrious than hard working, and constantly want to live by means of an easy profession. They could no longer live off the profits of the theatre that had supported them up until now. They could either die of hunger, or change vocation, and people of the same character who came after them devoted their talents to other professions.

I will briefly leave off my train of thought to explain the sense in which I hold that the theatres of Rome were apparently closed when Totila sacked this city. I mean only that the Theatre of Marcellus, and the other magnificent theatres, were destroyed or were rendered unusable by the damage that they had sustained, and that the sumptuous productions that had been performed there ceased. I do not mean to say that all performances of comedies ceased. On the contrary, I believe that in Rome and the other large cities that had suffered the same misfortunes as the capital, people began, once the times became a little less disturbed, to act theatrical pieces, but without the old stage machinery. In the course of time, the sumptuous stage of the 12th century since the foundation of Rome became, in the 13th century of this era, as simple as it had been at the beginning of its 5th century. It would return to the state in which Livius Andronicus had found it.

The ordinances of the kings of our second dynasty clearly show that in their time there were professional actors who performed theatrical pieces. In these ordinances they renewed the law of the Codex Theodosianus that forbade all form of profanity on the stage.[3] "We condemn," said these laws, "to corporal punishment and exile the actors who would dare to appear on the stage dressed in the attire worn by priests, monks, nuns, and all ecclesiastical people." *Si quis ex scenicis vestem sacerdotalem, aut monasticam, vel mulieris religiosae, vel qualicunque ecclesiastico statu similem indutus fuerit, corporali poenae subsistat, et exilio tradatur* [Benedicti Capitularium [*Benedictine Capitulary* 1.388].[4]

Actors of all times ought to prevent themselves from engaging in this sort of profanity. However, our King Charles IX was still obliged to forbid such profanity in the edict that he proclaimed in 1561 in response to the complaints and grievances of the Estates General assembled in Orleans. Article 24 of this edict states that, "Actors in farces, acrobats, and similar persons are forbidden

3 The *Codex Theodosianus* [Theodosian Code] was a collection of the laws promulgated by the Christian emperors of Rome from 312 on. The collection was made at the behest of Theodosius II, known as Theodosius the Younger or Theodosius the Calligrapher (401–450), Byzantine emperor from 408 until his death.

4 The *Benedicti Capitularium* dates from the mid-9th century. Citation corrected. A translation precedes the Latin passage.

to perform on Sundays and holidays during the hours of divine services, to dress in ecclesiastical attire, and to perform lewd things that set a bad example, on pain of prison or corporal punishment." The fact that this law was renewed in the Edict proclaimed by King Henry III, in response to the remonstrances of the Estates General assembled at Blois in 1576, proves that this law was not exactly observed. Today it is difficult to believe that these wise laws were still not enforced. Here is what is said on this subject in a book entitled, *Very Humble Remonstrates to Henry III, King of France and Poland*[5] published in 1588 on the occasion of the Estates General that this Prince had convened, which is usually called the second Estate General of Blois, since it was again held in this city.

"Another great evil is committed and tolerated mainly in your city of Paris, on Sundays and holidays, which is a greater insult to the honour of God and to the celebration of his holidays than any other. It is so full of great abuses that I, together with the most learned, regard it as sufficient to draw the maledictions of God on you and your kingdom, particularly on the said city of Paris, in which this wickedness is more permitted than in any other part of your kingdom. These are plays and public entertainments during the said holidays and Sundays, by Italian foreigners as well as by Frenchmen, above all by those who are in a cesspool and house of Satan called the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who abuse the passion of the Christ by calling themselves his confreres. In this place they make a thousand scandalous assignations, to the prejudice of the honesty and virtue of women, and the ruin of the families of poor artisans, of which the lower level is full. For more than two hours before they play they pass the time in impure activities, in dicing, and public gluttony and drunkenness, which gives rise to a lot of quarrels and fights. On the platform, there are altars loaded with crosses and ecclesiastical ornaments. There, people impersonate priests dressed in surplices, even in unchaste farces, to make laughable marriages. Someone reads the gospels in an ecclesiastical chant in order, by chance, to encounter a saucy word that serves the game. As well, all of the farces are vulgar and obscene, to the great detriment of the youth who attend." This takes us too far from our subject. Let us return to the theatres that were established in Rome, before the barbarians devastated it.

A passage in Ammianus Marcellinus shows that, in his time, the number of people in Rome who earned a living from the arts who, so to speak, mounted the stage, was prodigious. This historian reports with indignation that when Rome found itself threatened by famine, they took the precaution of making

5 Nicolas Rollond, *Remontrancés très-humbles au Roi de France et de Pologne Henri III. du nom* (Paris: 1588).

all foreigners, even those who professed the liberal arts, leave town. "But," he added, "those who practiced the liberal arts, very few in number, were thrust out without a breathing space, yet the genuine attendants upon actresses of the mimes, and those who for the time pretended to be such, were kept with us, while three thousand dancing girls, without even being questioned, remained here with their choruses, and an equal number of dancing masters." One can judge from this that a huge number of theatre people were in Rome during the times of Diocletian or Constantine the Great. *Postremo ad id indignitatis est ventum, ut cum peregrini ob formidatam haud ita dudum alimentorum inopiam pellerentur ab urbe praecipites, sectatoribus disciplinarum liberalium, impendio paucis, sine respiratione ulla extrusis, tenerentur mimarum adseclae veri, quique id simularunt ad tempus, et tria milia saltatricum, ne interpellata quidem, cum choris totidemque remanerent magistris* [Amm. Marcell. *Hist*. Bk. 14].[6] When so many people made the musical arts their profession, it is not surprising that the ancients had so many manuals and so many practices relating to the musical arts, that we lack. The multitude of artists who profess a certain art gives it its range, and causes it to be subdivided into several particular arts.

The theory of music lasted long after the closure of the theatres, but most of the musical arts perished forever. I do not think that we have even a single memento of rhythmic, instrumental, hypocritical, or metrical music. We find the rules of poetical music in the poetry of the ancients, and I believe that the Church may well have preserved some musical rules in the chant of its services.

Among the responses to *The Greek's Questions to the Christians*, a work attributed to St. Justin Martyr, who lived in the 2nd century, we find that the faithful may use profane pagan airs when singing the praises of God [Question 107]. They may do so on the condition that they perform this music modestly and with dignity. This passage can be explicated by what St. Augustine said in an address that he gave on the anniversary of St. Cyprian's martyrdom. *Aliquando ante annos non valde multos etiam istum locum invaserat petulantia saltatorum. Istum tam sanctum locum, ubi iacet tam sancti martyris corpus*. […] *Per totam noctem cantabantur hic nefaria et canentibus saltabatur*.[7] The circumstances of the time and place indicate that this passage is about Christians.

6 Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 14.6.19. The translation appears in the preceding quotation.

7 Augustine, *Sermon* 311, (*in Natali Cypriani Martyris*) [On the Feast of the Martyr Cyprian] 5: "At some time after not very many years, the impudence of dancers had also invaded that place. That so sacred place where the body of a so sacred martyr lies … These impieties were sung and there was leaping by the singers here through the whole night."

Besides, this was the bishop who ended disorder. "Not long ago," the Latin reads, "dancers dared exercise their art in this respectable place, and even on the tomb of our sainted martyr. All night, they sang profane songs and actors declaimed there." Apparently some Christian had written a poem about the passion of St. Cyprian and people performed this poem on his tomb, in the same manner that they performed profane pieces in the theatre. Thus Justin does not want airs composed by pagans declaimed in churches; he wants them sung without gestures.

Be this as it may, the liturgy of the Church contains several hymns composed before the sack of Rome by Totila. Every hymn was sung. *Si non cantatur, non est hymnus*, said Isidore.[8] Since the melodies of these hymns are the same in all services, it is reasonable to think that the melodies were composed at the time when the [words of] hymns were written. Let us pursue this matter.

Ambrosian chant is still sung in several churches. It was composed or regularized by this saint, who died 150 years before Totila's sack of Rome. When this event occurred, St. Gregory the Great, who composed or regulated the Gregorian service and Gregorian chant, which are still in use in very many Catholic Churches, had already been born.[9] These saints did not create a new [sort of] music in order to compose the music of the services that they wrote, when they regulated them: it appears, from the manner in which contemporary authors wrote of these services that they admired in churches several already familiar songs. But all of these chants, whether they had been composed before St. Gregory, or composed in his time, could also be used to provide an idea of the excellence of the music of the ancients. Suppose that, a thousand years from now, the secular music composed in the last eighty years is lost, and the church music of the same period preserved. Could we not then form an idea of the beauty of our secular music on the basis of our church music? Though the characters of these works are different, do we not recognize the composer of

8 "If it is not song, it is not a hymn." Du Bos' source for this quotation might be Augustín de Herrera's *Origen i progreso del officio divino i de sus obseruancias catolicas desde el siglo primero de la Iglesia al presente* (Seville: 1644), 30.1. The reference seems to be to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It can also be found in Samuel Willoughby Duffield's *The Latin Hymn Writers and their Hymns* (1889) in chapter 5 on Ambrose, attributed to the Council of Toledo in AD 633.

9 Saint Gregory, given the epithet 'the Great' (ca. 540–604), Pope from 590 until his death. Du Bos accepts the story, now believed to be spurious, that Gregory was responsible for the codification or regularization of Gregorian chant. Musicologists now believe that the style of chant known as Gregorian emerged in the 9th and 10th centuries. Gregorian chant does incorporate some elements of chant used in early Roman churches.

Arminda in Lully's *Dies irae*?[10] Certainly, connoisseurs admire the beauty of the Preface and several other chants of the Gregorian service though, as we noted at the beginning of this third volume, it is much closer to natural declamation than our music is.

I now return to a very difficult subject, that is, the old practice of writing and notating declamation.

10 In addition to his operas, Lully wrote a considerable body of sacred music, including his *Dies irae* (1683).

CHAPTER 18

Reflections on the Advantages and Disadvantages That Result from the Notated Declamation of the Ancients.

Two reasons lead me to believe the practice in question had more advantages than disadvantages, and that experience led the ancients to prefer notated declamation to free declamation. Firstly, the ancient practice prevented actors from giving misinterpretations that even the most intelligent sometimes give of lines that they recite without fully understanding. Secondly, an able writer of declamation would often suggest to actors expressiveness and beauties that they were not always capable of finding by themselves. They were not all, in Horace's words, as *doctus* as Roscius.[1]

We know with what success la Champmeslé[2] performed the role of Phaedra when Racine had taught her the declamation line by line. Boileau deigned to speak of it and our stage has even preserved some vestiges or some remains of this declamation, that could have been written down, if we had had the proper symbols. So, it is true that the good easily stands out in performances that are judged by sentiment, and it is not forgotten, though we have neglected to record it.

Finally, a tragedy with notated declamation has the same advantage as an opera. Mediocre actors can perform it passably. They will not make a tenth of the mistakes they would make, either through mistaking the tone, and consequently the action appropriate to the lines they speak or introducing passion in several unsuitable passages. This is what happens all of the time in modern theatre: the actors, some of whom have never even studied their craft, satisfying their own whims, make up the declamation of a role when they often do not understand several lines.

In the second place, suppose each particular actor is as capable of making up the declamation of a tragedy as a master of the art. It would still be true that the declamation of a piece that has been notated from beginning to end by a single person would be better arranged and managed than a declamation in which each actor performs his role in his own style. This free declamation

1 Horace, *Epistles* 2.82. *Doctus* means 'learned.'

2 Marie Champmeslé (1642–1698), great French actress. Some of Racine's finest play were written with her in mind. The role of Phaedra was her greatest triumph.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004465947_113

would often have thrown Roscius off the beat. There is even more reason why it should disconcert some of our actors. They have not been advised to study diversity, intervals, and, if I am permitted to use this expression, sympathy of tone, and do not know how to get out of difficulties into which a lack of coordination very often throws them. For it is as easy to coordinate different roles that must be alternately spoken, by recording in writing the declamation of the piece, as it is difficult remember it, when it has not been put on paper.

Many of our actors have no guide but instinct and practice. So we see that they do not know how to proceed when the actor who performs with them does not end on a tone that permits them to begin with a tone which they had prepared, as much by habit as by reflection. This is why they so often accuse each other of speaking in crude tones, and especially of finishing their couplets badly, in a manner that discomfits, they say, the one who speaks immediately after them. These problems would not happen if the declamation was notated or, at least, they could only happen as they do in the opera, when an actor sings off key. That is, the fault was the artist's, not the art's, which had done enough to prevent the error.

Spectators and actors are to be more pitied today. Spectators feel the faults of the actors, as if the art of declamation still existed as it did in the time of Quintilian, though the actors can no longer help themselves to this lost art.

All arts are nothing other than methods regulated by certain principles. When principles are examined, they are found to be maxims derived from several observations of the effects of nature. Nature always produces its effect in conformity with the rules that have been prescribed for it. Thus in matters of sentiment, the effects of nature always cause in us the same agreeable or disagreeable sensations, whether we are aware or not of how this happens. The effects are the same whether we trouble ourselves to discover the causes of these effects, or are content to enjoy them. Whether, in short, in accordance with certain rules we reduce to a method the art of arranging the effects of natural causes, or we only follow instinct in the application that we make of these causes.

Thus we do not fail to feel the errors into which our actors stumble, although we do not know the art that teaches how to avoid making them. We see even in Cicero that, of those who booed the actors of his time for missing the beat, only a small number of people understood the art and could say precisely in what the fault consisted. Most knew it only by means of sentiment. In an audience of spectators, how many people really understand the music? However, when an actor messes up the metre, either by elongating or shortening a syllable too much, all of the audience shouts as one. *Quotus enim quisque est qui teneat artem numerorum ac modorum? At in eis si paulum modo offensum est,*

ut aut contractione brevius fieret aut productione longius, theatra tota reclamant [Cic. *Orat*. 3].[3]

But, someone will say, we have several actors who are well versed in their art who can, in themselves preparing the declamation of their roles, in accordance with their natural talents, give them beauties and charms that only they could. Secondly, someone will add, a notated declamation must take from actors, who are subject to it, their fire and enthusiasm. Their acting cannot be natural and, at least, it must become cold. The ancient practice puts the excellent actor at the level of a mediocre one.

I respond to the first objection. True, this practice costs us some of the beauties of a role performed by an excellent actor. For example, if the actress who plays Paulina in *Polyeuctus* were required to follow a declamation written by someone else, this subordination would prevent her from giving beauties to some passages of her performance. But, to take the same example, this actress would perform the role of Paulina equally well, if this role were written and notated. On the other hand, how much would we gain if all the roles of *Polyeuctus* were composed? Think of how the secondary roles are declaimed by actors who recite them freely. Finally, once we agree that there will always be in all theatres a larger number of mediocre actors than excellent actors, we can no longer disagree that the loss, of which the objection speaks, is not compensated in a manner in which ten would be gained for one lost.

The second objection is that making actors subject to a notated declamation must take from them their enthusiasm. Consequently, this subjection must put an actor with genius at the level of one who has none. I respond to this objection that this notated declamation is like the music of our opera. The writer of the most exact and intelligent declamation still leaves room for good actors to show off their talents. They can make apparent, not only by their gestures, but also by their delivery, their superiority to mediocre actors. It is impossible to notate all accents, sighs, softenings, inflections, attitudes, and bursts of voice. In short, if it is permitted to say so, it is impossible to notate the spirit of declamation. A variety of tones is only its body. Even in music, it is impossible to write out everything that must give to song its true expression, its power, and all of the charms of which it is capable. The precise tempo of a passage cannot be written, though this tempo is the soul of the music. All musicians, and especially Italian musicians, indicate in ordinary letters beside a composition whether the tempo is fast or slow, but do so only imperfectly. Hitherto, as I have already said, the true tempo of a composition can only be preserved by tradition, so

3 Cicero, *Orator* 3.196. Quotation corrected.

to speak. Instruments invented to precisely record, by means of clockwork, the right tempo that composers have given to their airs and melodies have not hitherto had much success.[4]

Thus, the mediocre actor who sings the role of Atys or that of Roland does not sing as a good actor does, even though they intone the same notes and follow Lully's rhythm. The good actor senses the spirit of the song he sings and appropriately accelerates or slows some notes; he borrows from one to give to another. He swells or holds back his voice and lengthens some passages. Finally, he does several things suitable for giving his song more expression and more charm, which a mediocre actor cannot do, or does poorly. Each actor adds from his own store to that which cannot be written in notes and does so in proportion to his means.

Some people saw the operas of Lully, which are enjoyed by all nations, performed when Lully was still alive, and verbally taught willing actors the things that cannot be written in notes. They report that they found in these performances an expression that is scarcely heard today. We find in subsequent performances the melodies of Lully, they add, but often we no longer find in them the spirit that animates these melodies. The recitatives appear to have no soul, and the ballet airs leave us almost unmoved. These people claim, as a proof of what they say, that performances of the operas of Lully today last longer than they did when he performed them, though they ought to be shorter at present, because the airs for violin, that Lully played twice, are not repeated. This is a result, according to these people, for which I am not responsible, of no longer observing Lully's tempo. The actors have altered it, either from incompetence or presumption.

Thus it is certain that the score of an opera does not determine everything. It leaves a lot to do, and an actor can do it well or poorly, according to what he is capable of doing. A fortiori, we can conclude that writers of declamation do not shroud the talents of good actors.

Finally, the requirement to follow a notated declamation would not make ancient actors passionless actors and, consequently, incapable of touching the spectator. In the first place, actors who perform opera do not cease to be themselves touched while singing. The requirement to follow the notes and the rhythm does not prevent them becoming animated and, consequently, declaiming easily and naturally. Similarly, the requirement that ancient actors

4 The first metronome was developed by Étienne Loulié in 1696, but it made no sound and lacked an escapement to keep the pendulum moving at a steady rate. The modern metronome dates from the early-19th century.

follow a notated declamation did not prevent these actors from putting themselves in the place of the character that they represent. It is enough. In the second place, and this by itself refutes the objection to which I respond, we know with great certainty that ancient actors were as touched, though forced to follow a notated declamation, as ours are in declaiming freely. Quintilian wrote that he had often seen players and actors leave the stage with tears in their eyes, when they played engaging scenes. They were touched, they were made to cry, as ours are. *Vidi ego saepe histriones atque comoedos, cum ex aliquo graviore actu personam deposuissent, flentes adhuc egredi* [*Instit*. Bk. 6, ch. 2].[5] Besides, what distinctions did the ancient fail to make among their actors? This objection against the practice of writing and notating declamation might have seemed serious, before we knew about opera. However, the success of this [type of] performance, where the actor is constrained, as we have said, to follow the notes and rhythm, makes the objection frivolous. Our experience quickly dispels any shadow of a doubt, that reason alone would perhaps not be able to remove. It is dangerous to risk giving reasons prior to experience. We ought to reflect carefully before judging that reasoning that depends on probability is sound. In contrast, experience convinces in an instant. Finally, why did the ancients, who knew the advantages of free declamation as well as us, decide, after experience, in favour of notated declamation?

But, someone will say, most professionals are against the practice of writing and notating declamation, as soon as this practice is explained to them. In the first place, I will respond that several trustworthy people have assured me that Molière, guided by the force of his genius, and apparently without ever knowing what has been presented here concerning ancient music, did something like what the ancients did. He developed a notation to indicate the tones that he needed to adopt in declaiming roles, in order that they might always be recited in the same manner. I have also heard that Beaubourg[6] and some other actors of our stage adopted this practice. In the second place, we must not be surprised by professionals' judgement. The human spirit naturally hates the hindrances that result from methods that limit it to operation only according to certain rules. It does not want to be constrained in its activities, said Montaigne.[7] We propose that barbarians adopt military discipline that is foreign to them. Its laws, they will immediately respond, must take away from

5 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 6.2.35.

6 Pierre Trochon de Beaubourg (1662–1725), French actor. He joined the troupe of the Comédie-française in 1692. Some thought his declamation was rather exaggerated, but he enjoyed great popularity with audiences.

7 We have been unable to identify where Montaigne says this in print.

their courage the impetuosity that makes them conquer. We know very well, however, that military discipline supports men's valour by means of the rules to which they are subject. The fact that people, who have always declaimed without knowing any rules besides instinct and practice, disapprove of ancient practices on first blush does not entail that they would continue to fault it, if they went to the trouble to reflect on the advantages and compensating disadvantages. Perhaps they would even regret that they did not have a similar art, when they were still in their youth, a time when we easily learn to execute, following a certain procedure.

Following rules that are learned from childhood on soon ceases to be a constraint. It seems that rules that are studied then become second nature in us. Quintilian has an answer for those who hold that the orator who only follows his own genius and enthusiasm must be more touching than an orator who regulates in a premeditated fashion his actions and gestures by means of the precepts of the art. He says that to think thus is to condemn all sorts of study. Culture always embellishes the best parts of nature. *Sunt tamen qui rudem illam, et qualem impetus cuiusque animi tulit, actionem iudicent fortiorem et solam viris dignam, sed non alii fere quam qui etiam in dicendo curam et artem et nitorem, et quidquid studio paratur, … nostro labori dent veniam, qui nihil credimus esse perfectum, nisi ubi natura cura iuvetur* [*Instit*. Bk. 11, ch. 3].[8]

End of Book Three

8 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 11.3.10–11. Quotation corrected. "There are, however, those who consider that delivery which owes nothing to art and everything to natural impulse is more forcible, and in fact the form of delivery which is worthy of a manly speaker. But these persons are as a rule identical with those who are in the habit of disapproving of care, art, polish and every form of premeditation in actual speaking … I must ask them to be indulgent to the efforts to which I am committed by my belief that we cannot hope to attain perfection unless nature is assisted by study."

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Académie Française. *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: 1694).

Addison, Joseph. *Anecdotes of Polite Literature*, vol. 3 (London: 1764).

Algarotti, Francesco. *Le Newtonianism pour les dames* (Paris: 1739).

Ammianus Marcellinus. *History*, vol. 1, trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge MA: 1950).

Anonymous. *Magnum etymologicum Graecae linguae, nunc recens summa adhibita diligentia excusum, & innumerabilibus pene dictionibus locupletatum* (Venice: 1549).

Anonymous. "Montausier, Charles de Sainte-Maure," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 18 (New York: 1910–1911).

Antoine, Guillaume Françoise (Marquis de l'Hôpital). *Analyse des Infiniment Petits pour l'Intelligence des Lignes Courbes* (Paris: 1696).

Aristotle. *Poetics* (*Aristotelis De Poetica*), ed. Daniel Heinsius (Amsterdam: 1611).

Aristotle. *Poetics*, trans. Ingram Bywater in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: 1984).

Aristotle. *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge MA: 1932).

Aristotle. *Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, trans. H.P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge MA: 1938).

Arnauld, Antoine and Claude Lancelot. *Grammaire générale et raisonnée contenant les fondemens de l'art de parler, expliqués d'une manière claire et naturelle* (Paris: 1660).

Arnobius. *The Seven Books of Arnobius Against the Heathens*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, ed. Philip Schafe and Henry Wace (New York: 1926).

Athenaeus of Naucratis. *Deipnosophistae*, or *Philosophers/ Sophists at Dinner*, rept. by Isaac Casaubon (Heidelburg: 1597).

Augustine. *The Immortality of the Soul, The Magnitude of the Soul, On Music, The Advantange of Believing, On Faith in Things Unseen*, trans. Ludwig Schopp (Washington D.C.: 1947).

Augustine. *The Retractions*, trans. Mary Inez Bogan (Washington D.C.: 1968).

Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson (New York: 1958).

Augustine. *Against the Academicians; The Teacher*, trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: 1995).

Augustine. *Four Sermons of Saint Augustine Delivered for the Feast of Saint Cyprian* (*Maurist Sermons 309, 310, 311, 312*), trans. John M. Utz (Washington D.C.: 1966).

Aulus Gellius. *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge MA: 1927).

Barbay, Pierre (or Barbey). *Commentarius in Aristotelis Logicam* (Paris: 1675).

Barclay, John. *Icon Armonium* (London: 1614), trans. by John Barclay as *The Mirrour of Mindes, or Barclay's Icon Armonium* (London: 1631).

Baretti, Giuseppe. *The Italian Library containing an account of the lives and works of the most valuable authors of Italy* (London: 1767).

Bartholin, Sr., Caspar. *De tibiis veterum et earum antiquo usu* (Rome: 1677), 3 vols.

Batteux, Charles. *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, trans. James O. Young (Oxford: 2015).

Bayle, Pierre. *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (Paris: 1684).

Bellori, Giovan Pietro. *Descrizione delle Immagini dipinte da Raffaelle D'Urbino nel Palazzio Vaticano* (Rome: 1751).

Boccalini, Trajano. *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (Bari: 1612), trans. Henry, Earl of Monmouth as *The Politicke Touchstone* (London: 1674).

Boethius. *De institutione musica*, ed. Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig: 1867).

Boethius. *Theological Tractates. The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (Cambridge MA: 1973).

Boileau-Despréaux, Nicolas. *L'Art Poétique* (Paris: 1674).

Boileau-Despréaux, Nicolas. *Boileau's Lutrin: A Mock-Heroic Poem*, trans. Nicholas Rowe (London: 1708).

Boileau-Despréaux, Nicolas. *Ode Sur La Prise de Namur*, in *Oeuvres de Boileau*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1892).

Boindin, Nicolas. "Discourse sur la forme et la construction du theatre des anciens, Où l'on examine la situation, les proportions, et les usages de toutes ses parties," *Historie de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1 (1717), 136–153.

Bonifaccio, Giovanni. *L'Arte de Cenni con la Quale Formando si Favella Visibile* (Venice: 1616).

Bosse, Abraham. *Sentimens sur la distinction des diverses manieres de peinture, dessein, et gravure, et des originaux d'avec leur copies* (Paris: 1649).

Boyle, Robert. "Some Considerations touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy" (1663), in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis, 14 vols. (London: 1999–2000), vol. 3, 255–256.

Boyle, Robert. *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, Touching the Spring of the Air, and its Effects* (Oxford: 1660).

Breitinger, Johann Jakob. *Critische Dichtkunst* (Zurich: 1740).

Brumoy, Pierre. *Le Theatre des Grecs*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1730).

Budé, Guillaume. *De Asse et Partibus Eius* (Paris: 1514).

Burette, Pierre-Jean. "Dissertation, où l'on fait voir, que les merveilleux effets, attribuez à la musique des anciens, ne prouvent point qu'elle fust aussi parfait que la nôtre," in *Histoire de l'Academie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 5 (Paris: 1729).

Burette, Pierre-Jean. "Dissertation sur la melopée de l'ancienne musique," *Histoire de l'Academie royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 5 (Paris: 1729).

Cassiodorus. *The Letters of Cassiodorus, being a condensed translation of the Variae Epistolae of Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator*, trans. Thomas Hodgkin (London: 1886).

Cassius Dio. *Roman History*, Books 54–55, vol. 6, trans. Earnest Cary with Herbert B. Foster (Cambridge MA: 1917).

Cassius Dio. *Roman History*, Books 61–70, vol. 8, trans. Earnest Cary with Herbert B. Foster (Cambridge MA: 1925).

Chardin, Jean. *Journal du voiage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales* (London/Amsterdam: 1686).

Charpentier, François. *Défense de la langue française pour l'inscription de l'Arc de Triomphe* (Paris: 1676).

Chaulieu, Guillaume. "Épitre à Monsieur le Marquis de la Fare, qui m'avoit demandé mon portrait en 1703", in *Oeuvres de Chaulieu d'après les manuscrits de l'auteur, Tome Premier* (La Haye: 1777).

Chaulieu, Guillaume. "Au Chevalier de Bouillon en 1713", in *Poésies de Chaulieu et du Marquis de la Fare* (Paris: 1803).

Cicero. *Brutus. Orator*, trans. G.L. Hendrickson and H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge MA: 1939).

Cicero. *On Academic Scepticism*, trans. Charles Brittain (Indianapolis: 2006).

Cicero. *Verrine Orations*, vol. 1 *Against Caecilius. Against Verres, Part 1; Part 2, Books 1–2*, trans. H.G. Greenwood (Cambridge MA: 1928).

Cicero. *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J.E. King (Cambridge MA: 1927).

Cicero. *Pro Archias. Post Reditum in Senatu. Post Reditum ad Quirites. De Domo Sua. De Haruspicum Responsis. Pro Plancio*, trans. N.H. Watts (Cambridge MA: 1923).

Cicero. *Pro Quinctio. Pro Roscio Amerino. Pro Roscio Comoedo. On the Agrarian Law*, trans. J.H. Freese (Cambridge MA: 1930).

Cicero. *On the Republic. On the Laws*, trans. Clinton W. Keyes (Cambridge MA: 1928).

Cicero. *In Catalinam 1–4. Pro Murena. Pro Sulla. Pro Flacco*, trans. C. Macdonald (Cambridge MA: 1976).

Cicero. *On the Orator: Book 3. On Fate. Stoic Paradoxes. Divisions of Oratory*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge MA: 1942).

Claudian. *Shorter Poems*, trans. M. Platnauer (Cambridge MA: 1922).

Condillac, Étienne Bonnot. *Essai sur l'origine de connaissances* (Paris: 1746).

Creech, Thomas. *T. Lucretius Carus. The Epicurian Philosopher, His Six Books* De Natura Rerum *Done into English Verse with Notes* (Oxford: 1683).

Cyprian (Saint). *On Public Shows*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo NY: 1886).

Cyprian (Saint). *Epistles*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo NY: 1886).

Dacier, André. *La Poetique d'Aristote, contenant les regles les plus exactes pour juger du*

poëme heroïque, et des pieces du theatre, la tragedie et la comedie; traduite en François, avec des remarques critiques sur tout l'ouvrage (Paris: 1692).

Dacier, Anne Le Fèvre. *Les comedies de Terence, traduites en Français, avec des remarques* (Paris: 1683).

D'Alembert, Jean. *Eloges lus dans les séances publiques de l'Académie française* (Paris: 1779).

D'Alembert, Jean, Denis Diderot, Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, and [François-Marie Arouet] de Voltaire. "Taste," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (1757; Ann Arbor: 2003).

D'Arvieux, Laurent. *Voyage dans la Palestine*, rept. *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux* (Paris: 1735).

Davila, Enrico. *Istoria delle guerre civili di* Francia (Venice: 1630), trans. Charles Cotterell and William Aylesbury as *The Historie of the Civil Warres of France* (London: 1647).

De Boot, Anselme Boece. *Le parfaict ioailler, ou, Histoire des pierreries précieuses* (Lyon: 1644).

De Boulainvilliers, Henri. *Etat de la France*, 3 vols. (Paris: 1727/28).

De Brossard, Sébastien. *Dictionnaire de musique, contenant une explication des Termes Grecs, Latins, Italiens, & François, les plus usitez dans la Musique* (Amsterdam: 1703).

De Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin. *Turcicae Epistolae* (Amsterdam: 1663), trans. Edward Seymour Forster, *The Turkish letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, imperial ambassador at Constantinople, 1554–1562: translated from the Latin of the Elzevir edition of 1663* (Baton Rouge: 2005).

De Chambray, Fréart. *L'Idée de la perfection de la peinture demonstrée par les principles de l'art* (Paris: 1662).

De Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier. *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Paris: 1686).

De Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier. *Digression sur les Anciens and Modernes* in *Poésies pastorales* (Paris: 1688).

De Gourville, Jean Herauld. *Mémoires de Monsieur De Gourville, concernant les affaires auxquelles il a été employé par la Cour depuis 1642 jusqu'en 1698* (Maastricht: 1782).

De Herrera, Augustín. *Origen i progreso del officio divino i de sus obseruancias catolicas desde el siglo primero de la Iglesia al presente* (Seville: 1644).

De La Bruyère, Jean. *Discours, haranges, et autre pieces d'eloquence de messieurs de l'Academie Françoise, et autre beaux Esprits*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: 1693).

De La Fontaine, Jean. *Oeuvres Diverses* (Paris: 1774).

De La Motte, Antoine Houdar. *L'Iliade, poème avec un Discours sur Homère* (Paris: 1714).

De Marolles, Michel. *Les Mémoires de Michel de Marolles, abbé de Villeloin, divisés en trois parties, contenant ce qu'il a vu de plus remarquable en sa vie, depuis l'année 1600, ses entretiens avec quelques-uns des plus savants hommes de son temps, et les*

généalogies de quelques familles alliées dans la sienne; avec une briève description de la très-illustre maison de Mantoue et de Nevers (Paris: 1656).

De Montfaucon, Bernard. *Diarium italicum* (Paris: 1702).

De Piles, Roger. *Cours de peinture par principes avec un balance de peintres* (Paris: 1708).

De Réversaux, Guéau. *Mémoire pour la dame Danse, seule héritière de l'abbé Du Bos, contre les sieurs de Boiscervoise et consorts* (Paris: 1743).

De Roberval, Gilles Personne. "Observations sur la Composition des Mouvements et sur le Moyen de Trouver les Touchantes" in *Divers Ouvrages de M. de Roberval* (Paris: 1693).

De Thou, Jacques Auguste. *Historia sui temporis* (Paris: 1604–1608).

De Tournefort, Joseph Pitton. *Relation d'un voyage du Levant fait par ordre du Roi* (Amsterdam: 1718).

De Vauban, Sébastien Le Prestre. *De L'Attaque et de la defense des places* (The Hague: 1737).

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Related Writings* (1637), trans. Desmond M. Clarke (London; New York: 1999).

Descartes, René. *Dioptrics*, in *The World and Other Writings*, trans. Stephen Gaukroger (Cambridge: 1998).

Dechambre, Amédée, ed., *Dictionnaire des sciences médical*, vol. 30 (Paris: 1818).

Diodorus Siculus. *The Library of History*, vol. 1 (books 1–2.34), trans. C.H. Oldfather (Cambridge MA: 1933).

Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 1 (books 1–5), trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge MA: 1925).

Doucet, Camille. *Les registres de l'Académie française*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1895).

Du Bos, Jean-Baptiste. *Histoire Critique de l'établissement de la monarchie Françoise dans les Gauls*, 3 vols. (Paris: 1734).

Du Bos, Jean-Baptiste. *L'Histoire des quatre Gordiens provée et illustrée par des médailles* (Paris: 1695).

Du Fresnoy, Charles Alphonse. *De Arte Graphica* (Paris: 1668), trans. John Dryden as *The Art of Painting* (London: 1695), trans. William Mason as *The Art of Painting* (York: 1782).

Estienne, Henri. *Platonis opera quae extant omnia*, vol. 2 (Geneva: 1578).

Féraud, Jean-François. *Dictionnaire Critique de la Langue Française* (Marseille: 1787).

Fesch, Sébastien. "Sur une Medaille du Roy Pylaemenes," in *Recherches curieuses d'antiquité* (Lyon: 1683).

Feuillet, Raoul-Auger. *Choréographie, ou l'art de décrire la danse* (Paris: 1700).

Gaffurio, Franchino. *The Theory of Music*, trans. Walter Kurt Kreyszig (1492; New Haven: 1993).

Galilei, Vincenzo. *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, trans. Claude V. Palisca (1582; New Haven: 2003).

Gerard, Alexander. *An Essay on Taste* (London: 1759).

Gerard, Alexander. *An Essay on Taste*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: 1764).

Gravina, Giovanni Vincenzo. *Della Tragedia* (Naples: 1715).

Guettard, Jean E., Jean-Benjamin de Laborde. *Voyage Pittoresque de la France avec la description de toutes ses provinces. Description de la province de l'Isle de France* (Paris: 1789).

Guicciardini, Lodovico. *Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* (Bologna: 1567).

Harris, James. *Three Treatises: The First Concerning Art; The Second Concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry; The Third Concerning Happiness* (London: 1744).

Hawkins, Frederick. *Annals of the French Stage from its Origin to the Death of Racine*, vol. 2 (London: 1884).

Hayes, William. *Remarks on Mr. Avison's Essay on Musical Expression* (London: 1753).

Hédelin, François, abbé d'Aubignac. *Pratique du Théâtre* (Paris: 1657).

Hofer, Johannes. *Dissertatio medica de nostalgia, oder Heimwehe* (Basel: 1688).

Holstenius, Lucas. *Vetus pictura Nymphaeum referens commentariolo explicata a Luca Holstenio* (Rome: 1676).

Home, Henry, Lord Kames. *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh: 1751).

Home, Henry, Lord Kames. *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 3 (London: 1762).

Home, Henry, Lord Kames. *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh: 1774).

Horace. *Satires. Epistles. Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge MA: 1926).

Horace. *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge MA: 2004).

Huarte y Navarro, Juan. *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (Madrid: 1575), trans. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing as *The Examination of Men's Wits* (London: 1594).

Hume, David. "Of the standard of taste", in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, ed. Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose, 4 volumes (London: 1874–1875), volume 3.

Hume, David. "The Sceptic" in David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (London: 1882).

Hume, David. *Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed. Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge and Peter Harold Nidditch (Oxford: 1978).

Isidore of Seville. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: 2006).

Jordan, Charles Étienne. *Histoire d'un Voyage Littéraire fait en 1733*, 2nd ed. (La Haye: 1736).

Julius Caesar. *Caesar's Gallic War*, trans. J.B. Greenough, Benjamin L. D'Ooge and M. Grant Daniell (Boston: 1898).

Julius Pollox. *Onomasticon*, ed. William Dindorfius (Leipzig: 1594).

Junius, Franciscus. *On the Painting of the Ancients in three books* (London: 1638).
Juvenal. *Satires*, in *Juvenal and Persius*, trans. Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge MA: 2004).
Kalliakis, Nicholas. *De Ludis Scenicis Mimorum, et Pantomimorum* (Padua, 1713).
Kovaleff Baker, Nancy and Thomas Christensen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch* (1771–1774; Cambridge: 1995).
Lactantius. *Divine Institutes*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo NY: 1886).
Langbaine, Gerard. *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford: 1691).
Livy. *History of Rome*, vol. 1 (books 1–2), trans. B.O. Foster (Cambridge MA: 1919).
Livy. *History of Rome*, vol. 3 (books 5–7), trans. B.O. Foster (Cambridge MA: 1924).
Livy. *History of Rome*, vol. 5 (books 21–22), trans. J.C. Yardley (Cambridge MA: 2019).
Livy. *History of Rome*, vol. 6 (books 23–25), trans. J.C. Yardley (Cambridge MA: 1920).
Livy. *History of Rome*, vol. 10 (books 35–37), trans. J.C. Yardley (Cambridge MA: 2018).
Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (1689; Oxford: 1975).
Longinus. *On the Sublime*, in *Aristotle: Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge MA: 1995).
Loyseau, Charles. *Traités des ordres et simples dignités* (Paris: 1613).
Lucian. *The Dance*, in *Lucian*, vol. 5, trans. A.M. Harmon (Cambridge MA: 1936).
Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Ian Johnston, http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/lucretius/lucretius2html.html
Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius. *Saturnalia*, vol. 1 (books 1–2), trans. Robert A. Kaster (Cambridge MA: 2011).
Macrobius. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, trans. William Harris Stall (New York: 1990).
Malebranche, Nicolas. *The Search after Truth* and *Elucidations*, eds. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: 1997).
Mariette, Pierre-Jean. *Sommaire des pierres gravées du cabinet de feu M. Crozat* (Paris: 1741).
Mariette, Pierre-Jean. *Traité de pierres gravées*, vol. 2, *Receuil* [sic] *des pierres gravées du cabinet du roy* (Paris: 1750).
Martial. *Epigrams*, vol. 1, trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge MA: 1993).
Martianus Capella. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, vol. 1 *The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella*, trans. William Harris Stahl and Richard Johnson with E.L. Burge (New York: 1991).
Martianus Capella. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, vol. 2 *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, trans. William Harris Stahl with E.L. Burge (New York: 1992).
Mead, Richard. *Short Discourse concerning Pestilential Contagion* (London: 1720).

Meibomius, Marcus. *Antiquae Musicae Auctores Septem. Graece et Latine* (Amsterdam: 1652).

Ménage, Gilles. *Menagiana, ou Les Bons Mots et Remarques Critiques* (Paris: 1750).

Mendelssohn, Moses. *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: 1997).

Meursius, Johannes. *Orchestra, sive, De saltationibus veterum* (Leiden: 1618).

Montesquieu. *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller and Harold S. Stone (1748; Cambridge: 1989).

Morellet, André. *De l'Expression en musique* (Paris: 1770).

Muret, Marc Antoine. *Orationes, Epistolae, et Poemata, cum praefatione et insignibus augmentis M. Iacobi Thomasii* (Paris: 1572).

Newton, Isaac. *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (London: 1728).

Nugent, Thomas. *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (London: 1748).

Nugent, Thomas. *A New Pocket Dictionary of the French and English Languages*, 2nd ed. (London: 1774).

Ottieri, Francesco Maria. *Istoria delle guerre avvenute in Europa e particolarmente in Italia per la successione alla Monarchia delle Spagne, dall' anno 1696 all' anno 1725* (Rome: 1728).

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1 (books 1–8), trans. Frank Justus Miller, revised G.P. Goold (Cambridge MA: 1916).

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2 (books 9–15), trans. Frank Justus Miller, revised G.P. Goold (Cambridge MA: 1916).

Pascal, Emile. *Pensées and other Writings*, trans. H. Levi (Oxford: 1995).

Pascal, Emile. *Lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites sur le sujet de la morale et de la politique de ces Pères* (Cologne: 1656–1657).

Pascal, Blaise. *Traitez de l'équilibre des liqueurs et de la pesanteur de la masse de l'air* (Paris: 1663).

Pasquier, Étienne. *Recherches de la France* (Paris: 1565).

Perrault, Charles. *Critique de l'Opéra* (Paris: 1674).

Perrault, Charles. *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (Paris: 1687).

Perrault, Charles. *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Paris: 1688).

Persius. *Satires*, in *Juvenal and Persius*, trans. Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge MA: 2004).

Petit, Pierre. *Dissertatio de furore poetico* (Paris: 1683).

Petronius. *Satyricon*, trans. Michael Heseltine (London: 1913).

Petronius. *Satyricon. Apocolocyntosis*, trans. Gareth Schmeling (Cambridge MA: 2020).

Phaedrus. *The Fables of Phaedrus*, trans. Christopher Smart (London: 1913).

Plato. *Republic*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 and 6, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge MA: 1969).

Plato. *Philebus*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge MA: 1925).

Plato. *Laws*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 10 and 11, trans. R.G. Bury (Cambridge MA: 1967/1968).

Planudes, Maximus. "Commentary on Evanthius and Donatus," *Greek Anthology*, vol. 8, (Florence: 1494).

Plautus. *Prisoners*, in *The Comedies of Plautus* (London: 1912).

Pliny the Elder. *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock and H.T. Riley (London: 1855).

Pliny the Younger. *In praise of Trajan*, in *Letters, Volume II: Books 8–10. Panegyricus*, trans. Betty Radice (Cambridge MA: 1969).

Pliny the Younger. *Letters*, vol. 1 (books 1–7), trans. Betty Radice (Cambridge MA: 1969).

Pliny the Younger. *Letters*, vol. 2 (books 8–10), trans. Betty Radice (Cambridge MA: 1969).

Plutarch. *Life of Caesar*, in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge MA: 1919).

Plutarch. *Demosthenes*, in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge MA: 1919).

Polydorus Virgilius. *De Inventoribus Rerum* (Venice: 1499).

Prudentius. *Against Symmachus*, in *Prudentius*, vol. 1, trans. H.J. Thomson (Cambridge MA: 1949).

Pseudo-Aristotle. *Problems*, vol. 1 (books 1–19), trans. Robert Mayhew (Cambridge MA: 2011).

Pseudo-Aristotle. *Problems*, vol. 2 (books 20–38), trans. Robert Mayhew and David C. Mirhady (Cambridge MA: 2011).

Pufendorf, Samuel. *Introductio ad Historiam praecipuorum Regnorum et Statuum modernorum in Europa* (Frankfurt: 1688).

Quinault, Philippe. *Agrippa roy d'Albe ou le faux Tiberinus* (Paris: 1661).

Quintilian. *Institutes of Oratory*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge MA: 1920–1922).

Quintus Curtius. *History of Alexander*, vol. 1 (books 1–5), trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge MA: 1946).

Quintus Curtius. *History of Alexander*, vol. 2 (books 6–10), trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge MA: 1946).

Ramos de Pareia, Bartolomeo. *Musica Practica*, trans. Clement A. Miller (1482; n.p., Chicago: 1992).

Reid, Thomas. *Thomas Reid on Logic, Rhetoric and the Fine Arts: Papers on the Culture of the Mind*, ed. Alexander Broadie (University Park, PA: 2004).

Robertson, Thomas. *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts* (London: 1784).

Rollond, Nicolas. *Remontrancés très-humbles au Roi de France et de Pologne Henri III du nom* (Paris: 1588).

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *A letter from M. Rousseau, of Geneva, to M. D'Alembert, of Paris, concerning the effects of theatrical entertainments on the manners of mankind* (London: 1759).

Rubens, P.P. *Théorie de la figure humaine, &c., ouvrage traduit du Latin de P.P. Rubens, avec XLIV. planches d'après les desseins de ce célèbre artiste* (Paris: 1703–1704).

Saint-Amant, Jean-Tristan. *Commentaires historiques contenans l'histoire générale des empereurs, imperatrices, caesars, et tyrans de l'empire romain* (Paris: 1644).

Sallust. *The Conspiracy of Catiline*, trans. John Selby Watson (New York: 1899).

Santi Bartoli, Pietro. *Admiranda Romanorum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia anaglyphico opere elaborata ex marmoreis exemplaribus quae Romae adhuc extant* (Rome: 1693).

Santi Bartoli, Pietro, Francesco Bartoli, Pietro Bellori, and Michel-Ange de La Chausse, *Le Pitture antiche delle Grotte di Roma* (Rome: 1706).

Sauveur, Joseph. "Sur l'Application des Sons Harmoniques aux Jeux D'Orgues," *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: 1702), 90–92.

Scaliger, Joseph. *Varronis opera quae supersunt* (Paris: 1585).

Scudéry, Georges. "Observations sur Le Cid," in *La Querelle du Cid: pièces et pamphlets publiés d'après les originaux* (Paris: 1898).

Serveto, Miguel. *Christianismi restitutio* (Vienne (France): 1553).

Sidonius Apollinaris. *Poems, Letters*, books 1–2, trans. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge MA: 1936).

Sidonius Apollinaris. *Letters*, books 3–9, trans. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge MA: 1965).

Seneca. *Epistles*, vol. 1 (epistles 1–65), trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge MA: 1917).

Seneca. *Epistles*, vol. 2 (epistles 66–92), trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge MA: 1920).

Seneca. *Apocolocyntosis*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (London: 1913).

Seneca the Elder. *Declamations*, vol. 1 (books 1–6), trans. Michael Winterbottom (Cambridge MA: 1974).

Seneca the Elder. *Declamations*, vol. 2 (books 7–10), trans. Michael Winterbottom (Cambridge MA: 1974).

Society of Jesus. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, vol. 12 (Paris: 1717).

Solinus. *De Mirabilibus Mundi*, ed. Nicolaus Jenson (Venice: 1473).

Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. H.L. Jones (Cambridge MA: 1924).

Suarès, Joseph-Marie. *Praenestes Antiquae Libri Duo* (Rome: 1655).

Suetonius. *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. J. Eugene Reed and Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia: 1889).

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. 1 (Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Caligula), trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge MA: 1914).

Sulzer, Johann Georg. "Expression in music (*Ausdruck in der Musik*)," in *Music and*

Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries, eds. Peter le Huray and James Day (Cambridge: 1981).

Tacitus. *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb and Sara Bryant (New York: 1942).

Terrasson, Jean. *Dissertation critique sur l'Iliade d'Homère* (Paris: 1715).

Terrasson, Jean. *Critical Dissertation on Homer's Iliad* (London: 1716).

Tertullian. *On Spectacles*, in *Apology, De Spectaculis, Minucius Felix: Octavius*, trans. T.R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall (Cambridge MA: 1931).

Valerius Maximus. *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1 (books 1–5), ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge MA: 2000).

Varillas, Antoine. *Histoire de l'heresie de Viclef, Iean Hus, et Jerome de Prague: avec celle des guerres de Bohéme qui en ont esté les suites* (Paris: 1682).

Velleius Paterculus. *Compendium of Roman History*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley (Cambridge MA: 1924).

Vida, Marco Girolamo. *De Arte Poetica*, trans. *Vida's On the Art of Poetry, translated into English verse after the Manner of Mr. Pope, in three books* (London: 1750).

Virgil. *Eclogues*, trans. J.B. Greenough (Boston: 1895).

Virgil. *Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics of Virgil*, trans. J.B. Greenough (Boston: 1900).

Vitruvius. *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge: 1914).

Voltaire. *Correspondence*, ed. Theodore Besterman (Paris: 1964).

Voltaire. *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 14, ed. Louis Moland (Paris: 1877–1885).

Von Guericke, Otto. *Experimenta Nova* (Amsterdam: 1672).

Vossius, Gerardus. *Gerardus Johannes Vossius: Poeticarum Institutionum Libri Tres* (Amsterdam: 1647).

Vossius, Isaac. *De Poematum cantu et viribus Rythmi* (London: 1673).

Wallis, John. *Operum mathematicorum volumen tertium* (Oxford: 1699).

Woodfield, Richard. "Winckelmann and the Abbé Du Bos," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 13 (1973), 271–275.

Wotton, William. *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (London: 1694; 2nd ed. 1697, 3rd ed. 1705).

Young, Edward. *Conjectures on Original Compositions* (London: 1759).

Secondary Sources

Aikin, John and Mr. Nicholson, et al. *General Biography; or Lives, Critical and Historical, of the Most Eminent Persons of All Ages, Countries, Conditions, and Professions*, vol. 2 (London: 1801).

Arikha, Noga. *Passion and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: 2009).

Barker, Andrew. *Porphyry's Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* (Cambridge: 2015).

Bartel, Roland. "Suicide in Eighteenth-Century England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59.2 (1959–1960), 145–158.

Becker-Cantarino, Barbara. *Daniel Heinsius* (Boston: 1978).

Bell, Robert E. *Women of Classical Mythology: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: 1991).

Bonno, Gabriel. "Une Amité franco-anglaise du XVIIe siècle: John Locke et l'Abbé Du Bos (avec 16 lettres inédites de Du Bos à Locke)," *Revue de la Littérature Comparée* 24 (1950), 481–520.

Brown, Elizabeth A.R. *The Oxford Collection of the Drawings of Roger de Gaignières and the Royal Tombs of Saint Denis* [The Transactions of the American Philosophical Society] 78.5 (Philadelphia: 1988).

Buchenau, Stefanie. *The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge: 2013).

Buckley, Arabella B. *A Short History of Natural Science* (London: 1876).

Call, Michael. "A Comedic Practicum: Molière and Terence Revisited," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 31.2 (2009), 123–136.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: 1951).

Cattermole, Richard. *The Book of Raphael's Cartoons* (London: 1845).

Clark, Alexander. *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England (1660–1830)* (Paris: 1925).

Crombie, Alistair Cameron. *Science, Optics, and Music in Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (London: 1990).

Davies, Stephen. *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: 1994).

Dauvois, Daniel and Daniel Dumouchel (eds.). *Vers L'Esthétique: Penser avec les* Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture *(1719) de Jean-Baptiste Du Bos* (Paris: 2015).

Devine, Andrew M. and Laurence D. Stephens. *The Prosody of Greek Speech* (New York: 1994).

Evans, Benjamin. "Beginning with Boredom: Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' Approach to the Arts," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 9 (2017), 147–159.

Findlen, Paula. "Natural History," in *The Cambridge History of Science* vol. 3, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: 2006).

Forster, Edward Seymour. "The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*: their nature and composition," *The Classical Quarterly* 22.3/4 (1928), 163–165.

Friedman, John Block and Kristen Mossler Figg (eds.). *Trade, Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An encyclopedia* (New York: 2000).

Fubini, Enrico. *Music and Culture in Eighteenth Century Europe: A Sourcebook*, trans. Wolfgang Freis, Lisa Gasbarrone, and Michael Louis Leone (Chicago: 1994).

Gaines, James, F. (ed.). *The Molière Encyclopedia* (Westport, Connecticut: 2002).

Germa, Bernard. *L'Astrée d'Honoré d'Urfé: sa composition—son influence* (Toulouse: 1904).

Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (London: 1776).

Gilardi, Roberto. "Hume, Addison e l'Abate Du Bos: Indagine Intorno a un Possibile Influsso dello 'Spectator' e delle *Réflexions Critiques* sulla Genesi di *A Treatise of Human Nature*," *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 69 (1997), 3–47.

Girardin, Saint-Marc and Philarète Chasles. *La Harpe: Cours de littérature ancienne et modern*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1857).

Gouk, Penelope and Ingrid Sykes. "Hearing science in mid-eighteenth century Britain and France," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 66.4 (2011), 507–545.

Guyer, Paul. *A History of Modern Aesthetics: Volume 1: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: 2014).

Hay, John. *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus* (London: 1911).

Illiffe, Rob. "Philosophy of Science," in *Eighteenth-Century Science* [The Cambridge History of Science] 4, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: 2003), 267–294.

Jensen, Henning. "Comments on Peter Jones' 'Hume on Art, Criticism and Language: Debts and Premises'," *Philosophical Studies* 33 (1978), 135–140.

Jones, Jr., James. F. "Du Bos and Rousseau: a question of influence," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 127 (1974), 231–241.

Jones, Peter. "Hume on Art, Criticism and Language: Debts and Premises," *Philosophical Studies* 33 (1978), 109–134.

Jones, Peter. *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: 1982).

Jones, Peter. "The Aesthetics of Adam Smith," in *Adam Smith Reviewed*, eds. Peter Jones and Andrew S. Skinner (Edinburgh: 1992), 56–78.

Jones, Peter. "Hume on the Arts and 'The Standard of Taste,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, eds. David Fate Norton and Jacqueline Taylor, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: 2009), 414–446.

Jones, Roger and Nicholas Penny. *Raphael* (New Haven: 1983).

Kivy, Peter. *The Corded Shell* (Princeton: 1980).

Koller, Armin Hajman. *The Abbé Du Bos—His Advocacy of the Theory of Climate* (Champaign, Ill.: 1937).

Landon, Charles Paul. *Annales du Musée et de l'Ecole Moderne des Beaux-Arts*, 5 (Paris: 1803).

Lee, Sidney (ed.) *Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: 1895).

Lee, Simon. "Antoine Coypel's 'Aeneas in the Underworld': An Unpublished Drawing," *Master Drawings* 21.3 (1983), 283–285.

Letessier, Fernand. "Un Humaniste Manceau: Jacques Peletier (1517–1582)," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé: Lettres d'humanité* 9.9 (1950), 206–263.

Lewis, Philip. "Writing to the King: Perrault's Dedicatory Epistle for the Dictionnaire de l'Académie," *MLN* 107 (1992), 673–697.

Leysaht, Konrad. *Dubos et Lessing* (Greifswald: 1874).

Livingston, Paisley. "Du Bos' Paradox," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53 (2013), 393–406.

Lombard, Alfred. *La Correspondance de l'Abbé Du Bos (1670–1742)* (1913; repr. Geneva: 1969).

Lombard, Alfred. *L'Abbé Du Bos, Un initiateur de la pensée moderne* (1913; repr. Geneva: 1969).

Lukehart, Peter M. (ed.). *The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c. 1590–1635* (New Haven, Connecticut: 2010).

MacGregor, James. "The First Crusade in Late Medieval 'Exempla,'" *The Historian* 68.1, 29–48.

Malink, Marko. *Aristotle's Modal Syllogistic* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2013).

Marrone, Gaetana (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies* (New York: 2007).

Meyboom, Paul G.P. *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden: 1995).

Moore, James. "Hume and Hutcheson," in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, eds. M.A. Stewart and John P. Wright (Edinburgh: 1994), 23–57.

More, Hannah. *The Works of Hannah More*, vol. 4 (London: 1853).

Morrill, John. *Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: 2007).

Mossner, Ernest Campbell. "Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9 (1948), 492–518.

Norton, David Fate and Mary J. Norton, *The David Hume Library* (Edinburgh: 1996).

Norton, David Fate. "Hume and Hutcheson: The Question of Influence," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 2 (2005), 211–256.

Pocock, Gordon. *Boileau and the Nature of Neo-Classicism* (Cambridge: 1980).

Reiss, Timothy J. *The Meaning of Literature* (Ithaca: 1992).

Ridolfi, Carlo. *Le maraviglie dell' Arte ovvero, Le vite degli Illustri Pittori Veneti and dello Stato* (Venice: 1648).

Rizzoni, Nathalie. "Le Geste eloquent: la pantomime en France au XVIII siècle," in *Musique et Geste en France de Lully à la Révolution*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Berne: 2009), 129–148.

Roberts, Hugh. "Comparative nonsense: French *galimatias* and English *fustian*," *Renaissance Studies* 30.1 (2016), 102–119.

Romberg, J.B. *Brussels and its Environs; or, An accurate account of every object that can be interesting to strangers both in the city and its vicinity* (Brussels: 1824).

Sage, Michael M. "The *'De viris illustribus*': Authorship and Date," *Hermes* 108.1 (1980), 83–100.

Saisselin, Rémy G. *The Rule of Reason and the Ruses of the Heart* (Cleveland: 1970).

Shelley, James. "18th Century British Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2014 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetics-18th-british/

Schosler, Jorn. *John Locke et les philosophes français: la critique des idées innées en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: 1997).

Schosler, Jorn. *La diffusion de Locke en France: L'Essai sur l'Entendement de Locke et la lutte philosophique en France au XVIII^e^: l'histoire des traductions, des éditions et de la diffusion journalistique (1688–1742)* [Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century], 4 (Oxford: 2001).

Squire, Michael. "Making Myron's Cow Moo? Exphrastic epigram and the poetics of simulation," *Journal of American Philology* 131.4 (2010), 589–634.

Stephens, Frederic George. "Hans Holbein the Younger, Designer and Portrait Painter, and another Designer at Basle," *The Portfolio* 13 (1882), 12–17.

Stephens, Winnifred. *Margaret of France: Duchess of Savoy 1523–1574* (London: 1912).

Stewart, Donald C. "The Legacy of Quintilian," *English Education* 11.2 (1979), 103–117.

Stewart, M.A. "Hume's Intellectual Development, 1711–1752," in *Impressions of Hume*, eds. Marina Frasca-Spada and Peter J.E. Kail (Oxford: 2005), 17–58.

Sung, Il Kwang (ed.). *Mamluks in the Modern Egyptian Mind* (New York: 2017).

Tarán, Leonardo and Dimitri Gutas. *Aristotle* Poetics: *editio maior of the Greek text with historical introductions and philological commentaries* (Leiden: 2012).

Thoms, William John. *The Book of the Court* (London: 1838).

Thorndyke, Lynn. "The attack on Pliny," in *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 4 (New York: 1934).

Thurston, Hugh. *Early Astronomy* (New York: 1994).

Tsien, Jennifer and Jacques Morizot. "18th Century French Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2013 Edition). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/aesthetics-18th-french/

Turco, Luigi. "Hutcheson and Hume in a Recent Polemic," in *New Essays on David Hume*, eds. Emilio Mazza and Emanuele Ronchetti (Milan: 2007), 171–198.

Van der Werf, Hendrik. *The emergence of Gregorian chant: a comparative study of Ambrosian, Roman, and Gregorian chant* (Rochester, NY: 1983).

Vasari, Giorgio. *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 3, ed. William Gaunt (London: 1963).

Wellington, Robert. *Antiquarianism and the Visual Histories of Louis XIV: Artifacts for a Future Past* (Farnham: 2015).

West, Martin L. "The singing of Homer and the modes of early Greek music," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981).

Williams, David. *Voltaire: Literary critic* [Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century] 48 (Geneva: 1966).

Wood, Ian. *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: 2013).

Young, James O. "Resemblance, Convention and Musical Expressiveness," *The Monist* 95 (2012), 587–605.

Young, James O. and Margaret Cameron, "Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* and Hume's *Treatise*," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 58 (2018), 119–130.

Zammito, John H. *The Genesis of Kant's* Critique of Judgment (Chicago: 1992).

Index of Names

Acronis (Helenius Acronis) 601
Addison, Joseph 18, 23, 51, 164n4, 242n13, 246, 312, 334, 631
Aemius Paullus (Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus) 461
Aeschylus 141n10, 210n1, 405n13, 466, 723, 751–752
Aesop 211n3, 528n5, 557, 724
Aesopus (Claudius Aesopus) 470, 700, 755
Agricola (Gnaeus Julius Agricola) 491
Agrippa (Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa) 278, 467, 470
Agrippina, the Elder 111n1, 219–220
Alaric I, King of the Visigoths 175, 451, 459
Albano/Albani, Francesco 287, 367
Albert VII, Archduke of Austria 528
Alexander VI, Pope 425
Alexander VII, Pope (Fabio Chigi) 415
Alexander the Great 168, 172, 228–229, 287–288, 312, 347, 380, 401n2, 419, 422, 433–434, 454, 459, 461–462, 467, 493
Alexander Severus (Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander) 460, 462
Alfonso X, King of Castile 592
Algardi, Alessandro 348–349
Algarotti, Francesco 556
Alting, Menson (or Menso) 501
Alvarotti, Sperone Speroni degli 157n5, 158
Ambrose, Saint (Aurelius Ambrosius) 712
Ammianus Marcellinus 696, 758, 780–781
Amyntas I, King of Macedonia 465
Amyot, Jacques 439, 572
Anguier, François 471
Anguier, Michel 471
Ansaldo, Giovanni Andrea 302n7
Antiochus III 102
Antiochus IV (Gaius Julius Antiochus IV Epiphanes) 102, 221, 222n23
Antiphilus of Byzantium 286n45
Antoine, Guillaume Françoise, Marquis de l'Hôpital 592
Antonius 291
Antoninus Pius (Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius) 455, 628
Apelles of Kos 281, 401n2, 466
Appollonius of Rhodes 129n1
Appollonius of Tyana 701
Apuleius (Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis) 416n5, 563–564, 619, 702, 738–739, 744, 761, 769–771
Archimedes of Syracuse 592
Ariosto, Ludovico 13, 52, 67, 151, 189, 201, 216, 246, 310, 326n11, 471, 532, 573, 613, 770n31
Aristaenentus 765
Aristarchus of Samos 589
Aristides of Thebes 285
Aristides Quintilianus 635, 637–642, 644, 649, 654, 660–663, 676, 746, 750
Aristippus 108
Aristophanes 205, 466, 728
Aristotle 10–11, 25, 42, 54, 58–60, 63–65, 71, 76, 78–79, 107, 111, 125, 153, 176, 225, 303n1, 318n1, 360, 466, 526n1, 580, 583n3, 587, 593, 596n1, 597, 614, 618, 625, 644–646, 673–679, 751, 761
Aristoxenus of Tarentum 646, 666
Arminius (Hermann der Cherusker) 166, 620
Arnauld, Antoine 253n14, 473, 544n4, 593n38, 742n22
Arnobius (Arnobius of Sicca or Arnobius Afer) 763
Artemisia II of Caria 422
Asconius Pedianus 601
Athalaric 175
Athenaeus of Naucratis 658, 738, 748, 751, 768–769
Attius (Lucius Accius) 179
Aubry, Jean-Baptiste 374
Audran, Gérard 191, 472
Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis) 637–638, 642, 644–645, 647, 649–650, 670, 693, 742n22, 744–745, 759, 763–764, 778, 781
Augustus (Gaius Octavius) 16, 51, 111n1, 129, 161, 168, 187, 278, 368, 407–408, 419, 422, 425, 427, 447–448, 450, 454–457, 459–460, 462, 465, 467–470, 476, 542, 573, 580–581, 637, 640–641, 683, 766–768, 775

Aulus Gellius 289, 563, 720, 727, 730, 734, 745–746
Ausonius (Decimus Magnus Ausonius) 286, 454
Avitus (Marcus Maecillus Flavius Eparchius Avitus) 601–602

Bacchus 360
Bacon, Francis 80–81, 83, 527
Baillet, Adrien 373
Balbinus (Decimus Caelius Calvinus Balbinus) 458
Bandinelli, Bartolommeo 230, 236
Barbaro, Francesco 95n5
Barbay (or Barbey), Pierre 593
Barberini, Carlo, Cardinal 277
Barberini, Maffeo See Urban VIII, Pope
Barclay, John 359, 488
Baretti, Guiseppe 678n10
Baron, Michel 202
Barrow, Isaac 43
Bartholin, Caspar, the Younger 654, 658, 696
Bartholin, Caspar, Senior 654n1
Bartholin, Thomas 654n1
Bartoli, Francesco 279, 285
Bartoli, Pietro Santi 277, 279n21, 280–281, 285, 349
Bassano, Jacopo 245, 385, 389
Bassetti, Marco Antonio 288n53
Bassus, Gavius (or Gabius) 730
Bathyllus 766–769, 771n36, 774–776
Batteux, Charles 11n28, 15, 25, 27, 30, 33, 86, 473n210
Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb 28
Bayle, Pierre 4, 11, 80, 95n5, 417n15, 529n12
Bazzi, Giovanni Antonio 287n50
Beauchamp (or Beauchamps), Pierre (or Charles-Louis) 716, 753
Beazzano, Agostino 390n12
Belisarius (Flavius Belisarius) 554
Belleau, Remy 567
Bellini, Giovanni 388n5
Bellori, Giovanni Pietro 279n17, 279n21, 280, 281n30, 285, 377–378
Bembo, Bonifacio 427, 773
Bembo, Pietro 471
Bennet, Henry, Earl of Arlington 326
Berkeley, George 44, 81
Bernini, Gian Lorenzo 347–349
Bernoulli, Jacques 370
Bertaut, Robert 446
Billaut, Adam 374n4
Boccalini, Trajano 395, 529
Bochart, Samuel 473
Boeryermans, Theodoor 558n16
Boethius (Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius) 648, 661, 667–668, 670, 730
Boileau-Déspreaux, Nicolas 4, 69, 119, 127, 134n1, 147, 166, 168, 170, 184, 189, 212, 217, 243, 246–247, 258, 260, 337, 369, 381, 393, 395–396, 405, 407, 414, 416, 421n7, 450, 473, 490n24, 521, 541, 543, 551, 561–562, 565n17, 566, 569n10–11, 570n15, 571, 573, 575–576, 578–579, 600, 656n5, 784
Boindin, Nicolas 725
Bonifaccio (or Bonifacio), Giovanni 773n42
Borelli, Giovanni Alfonso 350
Bosse, Abraham 21
Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne 473
Bourbon, Nicholas 274
Bourdaloue, Louis 473
Boursault, Edmé 569
Bouzonnet-Stella, Antoinette 472
Bouzonnet-Stella, Claudine 472
Boyer, Claude 551
Boyle, Robert 80, 83–84, 587
Boyle, Roger, Earl of Orrery 169
Brahe, Tycho 590
Breitinger, Johann Jakob 28
Britannicus (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Britanniucs) 154n4, 218–220, 229
Brueys, David-Augustin 569
Brumoy, Pierre 87, 734n40
Brutus (Marcus Junius Brutus) 101n6, 147, 166, 470
Bruyère, Jean 393, 473
Bryennios, Manuel 667–668
Budé, Guillaume 758–759
Budes, Jean-Baptiste 474
Buononcini (or Bononcini), Giovanni 333
Burette, Pierre-Jean 636, 650, 653, 671–672
Burke, Edmund 24
Butler, Samuel 167n7

Caligula (Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus) 455–456, 464, 736, 739

Calvin, John 514n3, 588
Cambert, Robert 183n28
Cambyses II, King of Achaemenid Empire 494
Campra, André 337n17, 550n1
Capponi, Alesandro Gregorio 278
Caracalla (Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Augustus) 451–452, 456–457, 460
Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi da 112, 292, 294, 367, 387n2
Caravaggio, Polidoro da 292
Carey, Henry, Earl of Monmouth 395n13, 529n15
Carlos II, Spanish King 433n25
Carracci, Annibale 121, 142, 279, 284, 365, 367, 394, 414, 417, 440, 448
Casaubon, Isaac 658n12
Cassiodorus (Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator) 733, 744, 746, 769, 771, 775, 778
Cassirer, Ernst 20
Cassius (Gaius Cassius Longinus) 147
Cassius Dio 181, 461, 697, 737, 766
Castelli, Niccolò 574
Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catilina) 114
Cato the Younger (Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis) 470, 621, 741
Catullus (Gaius Valerius Catullus) 390, 408, 469
Cavaceppi, Bartolomeo 451n93
Ceasennius Paetus (Lucius Junius Caesennius Paetus) 221
Cedrenus (Kedrenos) 112
Champmeslé, Marie (la Champmeslé) 784
Chapelain, Jean 134–135, 242, 565, 616
Chapelle, Jean 369, 472
Chardin, John 434, 501, 504, 510
Charles I, King of England, Ireland and Scotland 144n15, 431
Charles II, King of England, Ireland and Scotland 432–433, 467, 530, 554
Charles V, King of Spain 382, 425, 433, 449
Charles VII, King of France 188, 215
Charles IX, King of France 406, 438–439, 513, 779
Charpentier, François 68, 250n6
Charpentier, Michel-Antoine 11
Chaulieu, Guillaume 266
Chesterfield, Philip Stanhope, Fourth Earl of 1
Chigi, Agostino 415
Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero) 43, 54, 136, 210, 214, 253, 257, 261, 264–265, 288–289, 296n5, 306, 323–324, 326, 329, 353, 355, 360, 369, 385, 397, 409, 417n14, 427–428, 444, 447, 464n154, 467, 470, 486–487, 518, 521–522, 539–540, 573, 577, 579, 590–591, 599, 619, 635, 683–685, 688–692, 696, 702–704, 706, 709–710, 713–715, 719, 729, 741, 743–744, 745–748, 750–751, 756–757, 760–761, 785–786
Cimabue (Cinni di Pepo) 442
Claude, Jean 473
Claudian (Claudius Claudianus) 454–455, 625
Clement IX, Pope (Guilio Respigliosi) 755n2
Clement XI, Pope (Giovanni Francesco Albani) 280–281
Cleopatra 238, 447, 468
Clodius Albinus (Decimus Clodius Septimius Albinus Augustus) 457, 744
Clovis 188
Colbert, Jean-Baptiste 280, 426
Collasse, Pascal 550n1
Commire, Jean 473
Commodus (Lucius Aurelius Commodus) 455, 457, 728
Constantine the Great 101, 296, 427, 452–454, 460–461, 758, 781
Conti, Torquato 521
Cooper, Alexander 431n16
Cooper, Anthony Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury 18, 23
Cooper, Samuel 431n16
Copernicus, Nicolaus 529n13, 579, 589, 596n1
Corio, Bernardino 335–336
Corneille, Michel, the Younger 196n15
Corneille, Pierre 11, 14, 58, 124, 138, 149, 157n3, 161, 163, 175n11, 183, 189, 193, 201, 210, 223–224, 232, 237, 239, 242, 245, 310, 312, 315, 325, 340, 353n4, 365, 369, 377, 394, 397, 399, 414, 421, 437, 439, 445–446, 472, 524, 538n3, 562, 566, 568, 575, 617, 687, 709, 774

Corneille, Thomas 472
Cornelia Cinna Minor 138
Correggio, Antonio Allegri da 194, 278, 367, 375, 379–380, 444
Coste, Pierre 6
Cotin, Charles 24, 217, 421
Coypel, Antoine 142, 146, 208, 472, 540n2, 555
Coypel, Charles-Antoine 540
Coysevoix, Antoine 471
Creech, Thomas 469
Cromwell, Oliver 114, 432
Crowne, John 575
Crozat, Pierre 279, 379
Crozat, Antoine 279
Cyprian, Saint (Thaschus Caecilius Cyprianus) 693–694, 702, 767, 781–782

D'Ablancourt, Nicolas Perrot 473, 571
D'Achery, Luc 473
D'Aguesseau, Henri François 521
D'Albon, Jacques 513
D'Alembert, Jean le Rond 5, 9n26, 27
D'Arvieux, Laurent 624
D'Auvergne, Godefroy Maurice de La Tour, Duke of Bouillon 267
D'Auvergne, Henri de la Tour 474
D'Ávalos, Fernando Francesco 471
D'Este, Ercole 436
D'Este, Francesco II 465n158
D'Este, Ippolito, Cardinal 246
D'Herbelot de Molainville, Barthélemy 473
D'Olivet, Pierre-Joseph Thoulier 9
D'Olivet (or Dolivet), Hilaire 753
D'Urfé, Honoré 110n10, 169n5, 170
Da Vinci, Leonardo 367, 387n2, 425n20, 437
Dacier, André 59, 67, 677–678
Dacier, Anne Le Fèvre 574, 724
Dagobert III, King of the Franks 272
Dal Pozzo, Cassiano 277, 280
Dalibray, Charles de Vion 371
Dancourt, Florent Carton 305n6
Danse, Marie Elisabeth (née Du Bos) 3
Dante, Alighieri 257n21, 517n1
Darius I, the Great 434
Daurat, Jean 567
David, Claude 441n57
Davies, Stephen 32
Davila, Enrico Caterino 490, 594
De' Medici, Giovanni di Lorenzo See Leo X, Pope
De' Medici, Guilio di Guiliano (Clement VII) 471
De' Medici, Maria 111n2, 192–193, 198–199
De' Medici, Ferdinando, Cardinal 347n1
De Almeida, Manuel 350
De Baïf, Jean Antoine 567
De Beaubourg, Pierre Trochon 788
De Bergerac, Cyrano 217
De Boot, Anselme Boece 587n17
De Boulainvilliers, Henri 8
De Boulonge, Valentin 368
De Bourbon, Henri Jules, Prince of Condé 195
De Bourbon, Louis, Prince of Condé 195–196, 474
De Bourbon, Louise Bénédicte, Duchess of Maine 774n46
De Brossard, Sébastian 636, 638, 679, 712n12
De Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin 495, 623–624
De Campistron, Jean Galbert 173, 717n26
De Camps, François, Abbé of Signy 4
De Castro, Guillem 149n24
De Cervantes, Miguel 109–110
De Chambray, Roland Fréart 20, 226n1
De Chateaubriand, François-Réne 34
De Chaulieu, Guillaume Amfrye 240, 265–269
De Coligny, Gaspard 513
De Commines, Philippe 334, 594
De Condillac, Étienne Bonnot 28
De Cornuel, Anne-Marie Bigot 172n4
De Cortona, Pietro 295, 302n8
De Crousaz, Jean-Pierre 18
De Fontenay, Jean-Baptiste Belin 131n1, 416n8
De Fontenelle, Bernard le Bouvier 66, 75, 185, 430, 436, 450, 487, 509, 556, 607n2
De Gaignières, François Roger 460
De Garros, Pey 570
De Gondi, Jean François Paul 473
De Gourville, Jean Herauld 530
De Gradval, Ricolas Racot 334n6
De Jarnac, Guy Chabot 104
De Jaucourt, Chevalier Louis 27
De Joyeuse, Anne de Batarnay 513
De L'Hôpital, Michel 437

De Lamoignon, Guillaume 521
De Lassus, Orlando (Orlando di Lasso) 336
De Launoy, Jean (Joannes Launoius) 473
De Longepierre, Hilaire-Bernard 4
De Lorraine, Charles, Duke of Guise 449
De Malherbe, François 182, 265, 445, 522, 541
De Mariana, Juan 594
De Marolles, Michel 445, 521
De Mautour, Moreau 198n19
De Menenzes, Francisco Xavier, Count of Ericeira/Ericeyra 576
De Montaigne, Michel 254n15, 356, 362, 391, 480n4, 487, 515n6, 788
De Montalvo, Garci Rodríguez 216n4
De Montfaucon, Bernard 279
De Muris, Johannes (John Murs) 671
De Palaprat, Jean 551, 569
De Pareia, Bartolomeo Ramos 17
De Peiresc, Nicolas-Claude 468
De Peyre, Henri-Joseph, Count of Troisvile 521
De Piles, Roger 21, 234, 367, 400n1
De Polignac, Melchior, Cardinal 276n5
De Réversaux, Guéau 3
De Ronsard, Pierre 52, 259, 438, 439n52, 440, 567–568, 571, 577, 626
De Ruel, Johann Baptist 316
De Saint-Amant, Jean-Tristan 468
De Saint-Gelais, Mellin 438
De Saint-Louis, Pierre 361n6
De Saint-Maure, Charles, Duke of Montausier 561
De Saint-Réal, César Vichard 394, 473
De Saumaise, Claude 473
De Tencin, Claudine Alexandrine Guérin 5, 9
De Thou, Jacques Auguste 336, 481, 515n7, 594
De Tournefort, Joseph Pitton 370, 530
De Troyes, Chrétian 576
De Tyard/Thiard, Pontus 567
De Valois, Marguerite 206, 438–439
De Vancy, Duché 337
De Vauban, Sébastian Le Prestre 475, 630
De Vaugelas, Claude Favre 473, 541n3
De Vivar, Rodrigo Diaz (El Cid) 58, 149n24
De La Calprenèdre, Gautier Coste 169n5, 170, 175n11
De La Châtaigneraie, François de Vivonne 104
De La Chausse, Michel-Ange (Michael Angelus Causeus) 279, 285
De La Cueva-Benavides y Mendoza-Carrillo, Alfonso 562
De La Fare, Charles Auguste, Marquis 265
De La Motte, Antoine Houdar 4n9, 66–67, 615
De La Rochefoucauld, François 473, 530n17
De La Vergne, Marie-Madeleine Pioche, Countess La Fayette 343n1
De La Vigne, André 361n6
Del Grillo, Bernardo Giacinto 417
Del Piombo, Sebastiano 443
Del Sarto, Andrea 367, 425n20, 437, 548
Delalande, Michel Richard 652, 656
Delisle, Guillaume 585
Demosthenes 447n84, 466, 702
Des Brosses, Anthoine 753
Descartes, Réne 16, 54, 80, 64–66, 81–82, 413, 473, 527n2, 529n11, 531n19, 583–584, 587n18, 598, 742n22
Desjardins, Martin (Martin van den Bogaert) 471
Desmares, Joseph 473
Desmarets, Henri 337n17, 550n1
Desmarets, Jean, Sieur de Saint-Sorlin 242
Desportes, Philippe 446
Destouches, André Cardinal 328
Destouches, Philippe Néricault 570
Diderot, Denis 27–28, 289n58
Didius Julianus (Marcus Didius Severus Julianus Augustus) 457
Dio Chrysostom 694
Diodorus Siculus 434, 664
Diogenes the Cynic 146
Diogenes Laertius 108
Diomedes Grammaticus 179, 181, 647, 687, 690–692, 719, 723
Dionysius of Halicarnassus 734
Dobson, William 431n16
Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri) 367, 395, 414, 416
Domitian (Titus Flavius Caesar Domitianus Augustus) 454, 456–457, 635, 777
Domitius Afer (Gnaeus Domitius Afer) 715
Donatus (Aelius Donatus) 469, 601, 668, 684, 693, 698, 703–704, 721, 767

Doria, Andrea 471
Doria, Don Ambrogio Spinola 528–529
Drusilla 222
Dryden, John 42, 400n1, 431, 576, 677n9
Du Bartas, Guillaume de Salluste 259
Du Bellay, Joachim 206n10, 567
Du Bos, Claude 3
Du Bos, Marguerite (née Foy) 3
Du Fresne, Charles (Sieur du Cange) 473
Du Fresnoy, Charles Alphonse 367, 400, 401n2, 431n15
Du Mans, Peletier 259n27
Du Ryer, Pierre 216
Dubois, Guillaume 7
Duchesne, François 473
Dürer, Albrecht 444

Edelinck, Gérard 472
Elizabeth, Queen of England 431
Elzevier, Lodewijk 303
Ennius (Quintus Ennius) 566, 689, 709
Epicurus 54, 77, 357n12
Euripides 66n102, 109–110, 141n10, 210n1, 211n2, 466, 563–564, 688, 694n28
Eustathius of Thessalonica 601
Evanthius (or Euanthius) Grammaticus 684, 693n22

Farnese, Alessandro See Paul III, Pope
Félibien, André 21
Fénelon, François 244n1, 473
Féraud, Jean-François 259n26
Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor 623
Fesch, Sébastien 468n171
Festus (Sextus Pompeius Festus) 180
Feuillet, Raoul-Auger 708, 748
Flaccus Claudii 647
Flavius Josephus (Joseph Ben Matthias) 222
Fléchier, Esprit 473
Fletcher, John 174n8
Florus (Lucius Annaeus Florus) 489, 490
Foy de Saint-Hilaire, l'abbé 3, 4
Fracastoro, Girolamo 471
Francis I, King of France 425, 437–440, 449
Frederick the Great, King of Prussia 9, 28
Fréminet, Martin 446
Fundanius (Gaius Fundanius) 469

Gaffurio, Franchino 17
Galba (Servius Sulpicius Galba Caesar Augustus) 458, 741n20
Galen (Aelius Galenus) 511, 776
Galilei, Galileo 585
Galilei, Vincenzo 17
Galland, Antoine 4
Gallienus (Caesar Publius Licinius Egnatius Gallienus Augustus) 419, 452, 455, 459–460
Gallus (Gaius Cornelius Gallus) 168, 187, 469
Garnier, Robert 446, 576
Gassendi, Pierre 473
Gerard, Alexander 24, 31, 53
Germanicus (Germanicus Julius Caesar) 111, 139–141, 143
Gibbon, Edward 8
Gibbons, Grinling 432
Gigli, Girolamo 574
Gilbert, Gabriel 183
Giordano, Luca 417
Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco) 366, 378, 388n5, 416
Giovanni I, Lord of Bologna 436
Girardon, François 347, 349, 471
Gnaeus Naevius 683n3, 684, 709
Gordian (Marcus Antonius Gordianus Pius Augustus) 452, 455, 458, 460–461
Gordian (Marcus Antonius Gordianus Sempronianus Romanus Africanus) 452n100, 458n135
Gordian (Marcus Antonius Gordianus Sempronianus Romanus Africanus Augustus) 452n100, 458n135
Goya, Jean (Flavio Gioja d'Amalfi) 583
Gracchus (Gaius Sempronius Gracchus) 692
Graevius, Johann Georg 6
Gravina, Giovanni Vincenzo 311, 331–332, 574–575, 577, 678
Gregory I, Pope 712, 782
Gregory XIII, Pope 448
Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint 112
Guicciardini, Francesco 334, 471, 573, 594
Guicciardini, Lodovico 334–336
Guidi, Domenico 441, 465n158
Guido of Arezzo 671
Guyer, Paul 19

Hadrian (Publius Aelius Hadrianus Augustus) 278, 291n62, 454–455, 730
Handel, George Frederic 311n4, 333n4
Hannibal Barca 223–224, 356, 489, 655
Hardouin-Mansart, Jules 468
Hardy, Alexandre 576
Harris, James 30–31
Harvey, William 81, 83, 85, 588
Hayes, William 31
Hecataeus of Miletus 619
Hédelin, François, Abbé d'Aubignac 60–62, 232, 522
Heinsius, Daniel 673, 676n6
Heliogabalus (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus) 457, 737
Hellinck, Lupus (Lupus Wulfaert) 335n9
Henry I, Prince of Joinville, Duke of Guise 481
Henry II, King of France 103–104, 438, 513
Henry III, King of France 439–440, 481, 513, 626n2, 780
Henry IV, King of France 111n2, 135, 151, 174, 195, 335, 420n5, 490, 513, 576, 626, 714
Henry VIII, King of England 425, 431
Hephaestion (grammarian) 261
Hephaestion (Macedonian soldier) 287
Herder, Johann Gottfried 28–29
Herodian 461
Herodotus 461, 493n34
Hippocrates 588, 629
Hofer, Johannes 477n1
Holbein, Hans, the Younger 431–432, 444n68, 444–445
Holstensius, Lucas (Lukas Hoste) 278
Home, Henry, Lord Kames 24, 31
Homer 54, 56, 68, 117, 141n10, 142, 246, 305, 388n3, 393, 395n12, 428, 435, 465, 504, 521, 523, 568, 573, 596, 600, 609n3, 612, 618, 619–621, 623, 627, 631
Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) 11, 25, 55–56, 68, 97, 113, 124, 133, 148–149, 151–152, 165, 168, 178, 182, 192–193, 209, 238, 241, 297–298, 300, 306, 328, 353–354, 358, 361–362, 365, 368, 371, 376, 384, 386, 390, 393, 396–397, 401, 403, 406–407, 414, 419n1, 420, 424, 439, 448, 454, 469–470, 500, 504, 521, 553, 564, 570–573, 579–580, 600, 606, 612, 620, 622, 684–685, 694, 697–698, 700, 701, 711–713, 717, 755, 784
Hortensius (Quintus Hortensius Hortalus) 470, 745
Huarte, Juan de san Juan 358
Huet, Pierre Daniel 473
Hutcheson, Francis 48
Hume, David 1, 23–24, 29, 31, 34–57, 94n2
Hylas 766

Innocent III, Pope 514n5
Innocent X, Pope (Giovanni Battista Pamphili) 349–350
Isidore of Seville 669, 684, 721–722, 736, 782
Isocrates 466

Jacopo, Giovanni Battista di (Rosso Fiorentino) 437
James II, King of England and Ireland 432
Jephthah 10, 147, 540
Jodelle, Étienne 567, 576
Jones, Peter 45, 50–51, 55
Jonson, Ben 616n1
Jordaens, Jacob 465
Jordan, Charles-Étienne 9
Julius II, Pope 292, 378, 422, 427, 436–437, 445, 460, 471
Julius Caesar 129, 136, 138, 147, 154–155, 172, 181n17, 194, 239, 300, 311–312, 380, 389, 422, 455–457, 459, 467n168, 470, 489–491, 523, 542, 621, 630, 755
Jully, Nicolas Baudot 371
Junia Calvina 219–220
Junia Silana 219
Junius, Franciscus (François du Jon) 302
Justin (Marcus Junianus Justinus Frontinus) 454n113, 488
Justin Martyr 694, 701–702, 781–782
Justinian I (Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire) 554, 600
Juvenal (Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis) 101, 163, 290, 304–305, 366, 393, 403, 405, 447, 454, 456, 464, 482, 495, 499–500, 562, 600, 680–681, 686, 727, 731, 746, 771

Kalliakis, Nicholas 768
Kant, Immanuel 25, 34
Kircher, Athanasius 276

Kivy, Peter 32
Kneller, Godfrey 432

La Fontaine, Jean 55, 209, 345, 369, 389, 394, 410, 437, 446, 450n89, 550, 570n15, 571, 573, 600
La Fosse, Antoine (Sieur d'Aubigny) 394
Laberius (Decimus Laberius) 181, 757
Lactantius (Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius) 205
Lancelot, Claude 253n14
Landon, Charles Paul 111n2
Lanfranco, Giovanni 367
Langbaine, Gerard 576
Le Bossu, René 232, 473
Le Brun, Charles 10, 108, 196–197, 201, 228–229, 234–235, 285, 344, 365, 368, 416, 437, 440, 446, 471, 555, 557–558
Le Fèvre, Jean 370
Le Fèvre, Tanneguy 658, 677n9
Le Gros, Pierre, the Elder 471
Le Gros, Pierre, the Younger 441, 471
Le Hongre, Étienne 471
Le Maistre (or Le Maître), Antoine 369, 473
Le Nôtre, André 473
Le Rochois, Marie 308
Le Roy, Jacques 468
Le Roy, Thomas 415n2
Le Sueur, Eustache 201, 368, 386, 437, 440, 446, 472, 555, 557
Lebreton, Nöel, sieur de Hauteroche 282
Leclerc, Sébastian 472
Lee, Sidney 86n114
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 19, 81, 473n210, 527, 592
Lely, Peter 432
Leo X, Pope (de' Medici, Giovanni di Lorenzo) 16, 76, 144, 415, 419, 422, 425, 427, 436, 440, 443, 448, 465, 471, 476, 573, 580–581
Leochares 395n10
Leoniceno, Niccolò 657n9
Leonitus of Jerusalem (Leonitus Scholasticus) 765
Lesage, Alan René 374n7
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 28–29, 85, 358n17
Leysaht, Konrad 29
Ligarius (Quintus Ligarius) 136
Livia Drusillia 467–468
Livius Andronicus (Lucius Livius Andronicus) 702, 709, 718, 720–721, 745, 755, 779
Livy 101n6, 102–103, 138, 164, 180, 223n30, 290, 356, 388n3, 422–423, 427, 463, 467, 470, 484–485, 488–490, 492–493, 499, 572–573, 576, 619n3, 655, 707, 718–721, 758–759, 768
Lobo, Jerónimo 350
Locke, John 4, 6–7, 16, 28, 44, 79–80, 84–85, 303n1, 603n9, 606n1
Lombard, Alfred 2, 3n8, 5n10, 6n11, 7, 28, 34n72
Longinus 69, 78–79, 168, 261, 324, 353n1, 455, 656
Lorrain, Claude 132n4, 388n3
Lotto, Lorenzo 388n3
Louis XII, King of France 437, 446
Louis XIII, King of France 2, 174, 437, 445–446, 513, 558n15
Louis XIV, King of France 7, 16, 51, 76, 182, 189n3, 196, 198n20, 206n11, 258, 328n20, 368, 419, 422, 426, 437–438, 440, 494n37, 513, 573, 578–579, 753n14
Loulié, Étienne 787n4
Loyseau, Charles 87, 221n12
Lucan (Marcus Annaeus Lucanus) 204, 349, 406, 454, 456, 461, 627
Lucian of Samosata 109n7, 110, 287–288, 642, 653, 692, 701–702, 720, 723, 748, 750, 763, 767–770, 772–773
Lucilius (Gaius Lucilius) 571
Lucretius 63, 99, 120, 469, 482, 508, 537
Lucullus (Lucius Licinius Lucullus) 250
Lully, Jean-Baptiste 62, 66n102, 170–171, 183n29, 206n11, 308n14, 311n4, 325–328, 331, 339, 341n4, 342, 381n14, 405n13, 473, 622n12, 652, 656, 677n8, 709, 716–717, 752–753, 770n31, 783, 787
Lysippos 466

Mabillon, Jean 473
Machiaveli, Niccolò 310, 334n8, 427, 453n104, 471, 573, 594
Macrinus (Marcus Opellius Severus Macrinus Augustus) 452, 457
Macrobius (Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius) 181, 601, 656–657, 686, 740, 747, 755–757, 766, 769

Maecenas (Gaius Cilnius Maecenas) 278, 407–408, 427, 766, 775
Mairet, Jean 446
Majorian (Flavius Julius Valerius Majorianus) 572, 720
Malebranche, Nicolas 240, 473, 598n2
Mansart, François 472
Marais, Marin 323
Maratta, Carlo 415–416, 555
Maratti, Carlo 278
Marcellus (Marcus Claudius Marcellus) 463, 778–779
Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony) 447, 457, 468, 739
Marcus Aurelius 295, 443, 455, 757
Marcus Pacuvius 43, 360
Mariette, Pierre-Jean 467n169–170, 468n171
Marius (Gaius Marius) 412
Marot, Clément 438
Marsy, Balthazard 471
Marsy, Gaspard 471
Martel, Charles 712n14
Martial (Marcus Valerius Martialis) 127, 390, 417, 456, 562–563, 566, 727, 771
Martianus Capella (Martianus Minneus Felix Capella) 658, 661–664, 666, 670
Martin, Saint Martin of Tours 150
Mary Stuart, Princess Mary 144
Mascaron, Jules 473
Mason, William 400n1
Massimo, Camillo, Cardinal 279–280
Massimo, Fabrizio Camillo, Marquis di Roccasecca 279n20
Masson, Antoine 472
Maurice, Emmanuel, Duke of Elbeuf and Prince of Lorraine 280
Maximinus (Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus Augustus) 456, 458
Maximus Planudes 684n7
Mazarin, Jules Raymond 535
Mead, Richard 278, 280
Meibomius, Marcus 635–637, 658, 660–662, 666, 671
Mellan, Claude 472
Ménage, Gilles 3, 490n24, 521
Menander 178, 466, 475, 562–564
Mendelssohn, Moses 28–30
Menippus 544
Mersenne, Marin 529n11, 586
Metius, Jacob (of Alkmaar) 82, 584
Meursius, Johannes 738
Michelangelo (Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni) 132n4, 200, 367, 376–377, 395, 445
Mignard, Pierre 555, 558
Milton, John 24, 302n6
Mithridates VI 222–223, 245, 498, 523
Moland, Louis 1
Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) 14, 24, 55, 124, 140, 142, 164n1, 177n1, 182–183, 210–213, 217n8, 254n15, 258, 262n33, 282n34, 321, 345, 365, 368, 394, 406, 410, 414, 421n7, 439, 446, 470, 490n24, 521–522, 541, 545, 551, 561, 566, 569–570, 573–576, 578, 626, 687, 716, 726, 731, 788
Molyneux, William 606n1
Monnoyer, Jean-Baptiste 131n1, 416n8
Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de 25, 29
Monteverdi, Claudio 17
Moreau, Jean-Baptiste 687n17
Morellet, Andrè 33
Motin, Pierre 217
Mouret, Jean-Joseph 775
Mouton, Jean 335
Mummius (Lucius Mummius) 463
Murena (Lucius Licinus Murena the Younger) 741
Muret, Marc Antoine (Muretus) 417–418
Myron of Eleutherae 296

Nanteuil, Robert 369–370, 472
Navagero, Andrea 390n12
Nepos (Cornelius Nepos) 423
Nero (Tiberius Claudius Nero) 229, 454–456, 458, 464, 542, 564, 573, 694–695, 697, 727–728, 762, 773, 776–777
Nerva (Marcus Cocceius Nerva Caesar Augustus) 455, 457, 777
Newton, Isaac 80, 83, 556, 592, 618
Nicole, Pierre 473, 593, 742n22
Norton, David Fate and Mary J. 35, 42–43
Nugent, Thomas 86–87, 340n2, 341n3, 341n4, 390n12, 744n12

Orsini, Fulvio (Fulvius Ursinus) 393
Otho (Marcus Otho Caesar Augustus) 221, 456, 458

Ottieri, Francesco Maria 554
Otway, Thomas 394
Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) 55–56, 127, 151n30, 158, 169, 187, 339n1, 361, 362, 368, 394, 408n22, 469, 566, 622n12, 679–681, 746

Parodi, Filippo 441n56
Parrhasius 230n13
Pascal, Blaise 367, 369–370, 473, 515n6, 520, 527n2, 544n4, 586–587
Pascal, Étienne 529n11, 586
Pasquier, Étienne 260
Paterculus (Marcus Velleius Paterculus) 172, 174, 224–225, 429, 450, 463, 470, 475–476, 542, 739
Patru, Olivier 473
Paul III, Pope (Alessandro Farnese) 471
Paul V, Pope (Camillo Borghese) 529
Pedanius Dioscorides 472
Peletier, Jacques du Mans 259n27
Pellison, Paul 473
Pepys, Samuel 432n23
Peraredus, Jean (de Peyrarede) 521
Perrault, Charles 4, 15, 66, 169–170, 228, 235, 316n3, 355, 419n4, 428n8, 473, 521, 579, 589, 607n2, 724
Perrin, Pierre 183
Perseus, King of Macedonia 461, 467
Persius (Aulus Persius Flaccus) 259, 404, 761
Pertinax (Publius Helvius Pertinax Augustus) 457
Perugino, Pietro 144n12, 365, 381–382
Pescennius Niger (Gaius Pescennius Niger Augustus) 457
Pétau, Denis 473
Petit, Pierre 362, 586
Petronius (Gaius Petronius) 434
Petronius (Gaius Petronius Arbiter) 403, 454, 540–541
Petronius, Saint 150
Phaedrus (Gaius Julius Phaedrus) 211, 469
Pherecydes of Syros 619
Phidias 295n4, 296, 463
Philemon 418n17, 563
Philibert, Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy 206
Philip, King of Macedonia 102, 419n3, 422, 459, 461–462, 467, 664
Philip II, King of Spain 173, 420n5, 433
Philippe IV, King of Spain 380, 381n13, 431, 433
Philips, Ambrose 575
Philolaus of Croton 589
Philopoemen 467
Philostratus 701
Picart, Etienne 472
Piso, Willem 294
Pitau, Nicolas 472
Pitau, Nicolas, the Younger 472
Pius V (Antonio Ghislieri) 104n17
Plancus (Lucas Munatius Plancus) 739
Plato 10, 15–16, 42, 54, 59, 76, 78, 96, 116–119, 124–125, 360n1, 387, 466–467, 476, 519, 573, 580, 644, 656n5, 700, 710, 736
Plautus (Titus Maccius Plautus) 178, 182, 310n3, 372, 439, 684, 726, 763
Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) 102, 276, 281n32, 282–283, 285–287, 291–292, 316, 401n2, 424, 426, 434, 468, 484n1, 557, 592, 657, 698–699, 732–733, 755–756, 762
Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus) 224n34, 413, 714–715, 777
Plutarch 138n1, 319n3, 380n10, 412n2, 461, 467n165, 619n3, 636n4, 664, 692n16, 697, 775
Poilly, François 472
Poilly, Jean-Baptiste 472
Poilly, Nicolas 472
Poitiers, Diane of 438
Polemon of Athens 112
Pollio (Gaius Asinus Pollio) 424, 469
Pollux (Julius Pollux) 697, 701, 726, 728, 769
Polyeuctes 157
Pompey the Great (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) 126, 136n4, 194, 542
Porcius Latro (Marcus Porcius Latro) 760–761
Porphyry of Tyre 639–641, 643–644, 646, 665–666, 676
Poussin, Nicolas 24, 27, 111, 122, 131–132, 139–141, 150, 192, 195, 201, 208, 228, 234, 276, 280, 344–345, 365, 368, 388n3, 389, 394, 398, 416, 440, 445n72, 446, 448, 472, 549, 555, 557
Pradon, Jacques 282, 551, 560–562
Praxiteles 295n4, 296, 463, 466

Priscian (Priscianus Caesariensis) 668–669
Propertius (Sextus Propertius) 261–262, 469, 566
Provenzale, Marco 277n9
Prudentius (Aurelius Prudentius Clemens) 732
Ptolemy, Claudius 54, 68, 579–580, 589, 596, 628, 667n19
Ptolemy I Soter 493n33
Publilius Syrus 180–181
Publius Consentius 765
Puget, Pierre Paul 441, 471
Pupienus (Marcus Clodius Pupienus Maximus) 548
Pylades 766–769, 774, 776

Quellinus, Jan-Erasmus 466
Quinault, Phillippe 183, 206, 216, 340–342, 369, 381, 384, 446, 473, 550–551, 562, 621, 687n18, 752, 770n31
Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilian) 107, 113, 117, 121, 160, 230, 241, 251, 253, 256–257, 261, 265, 275, 287, 300, 305–307, 309–310, 326, 354, 357–358, 376, 384, 389, 396, 411–413, 423n13, 455, 461, 470, 484–486, 520, 522, 531–532, 544–545, 563, 569, 588, 591, 594, 599–600, 602, 605, 619, 622, 631, 635, 637, 640–642, 644, 646–656, 669, 680–681, 685–686, 689n7, 691–693, 696–697, 700, 702–702, 704, 706, 710–711, 714, 719–720, 724–726, 728–729, 731, 739–741, 743–744, 749–750, 760, 762, 785, 788–789
Quintus Curtius (Quintus Curtius Rufus) 454–455, 543

Racine, Jean 14, 55, 67, 108, 124, 154, 156–157, 159–160, 163, 165, 175, 183, 189, 210, 215n2, 218–223, 239, 242, 245, 258n23, 262n33, 301, 310, 313, 319–320, 325, 337, 341–342, 345, 353n4, 369, 380, 384, 395–397, 407, 410, 414, 421, 428n8, 437, 446, 487, 523–524, 532, 540, 545, 551, 560–562, 571, 575–576, 613–614, 631, 687, 699, 705, 784
Racine, Louis 160n4
Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino) 132, 142, 144–145, 150, 191–192, 195, 201, 230, 234–235, 278–285, 284, 288, 292–293, 295, 316, 348, 365–366, 372, 376–382, 390n12, 394–396, 398, 414–416, 419n2, 420, 427, 438, 440, 442–445, 448, 471, 548–549, 598, 605, 609, 630
Rapin, René 63–64, 473, 574
Régis, Pierre-Sylvan 473
Regius, Henricus 504
Regnard, Jean-François 569, 726
Régnier-Desmarais, François-Séraphin 473
Régnier, Mathurin 184
Reid, Thomas 24, 31
Rembrandt, Rijn van 316
Reni, Guido 367, 388n3, 414, 417
Ricciarelli, Daniele (Daniele da Volterra) 443
Richelieu, Armand Jean du Plessis, Duke of 1, 59, 114n14, 374n4, 557n15
Ridolfi, Carlo 132
Riley (or Ryley), John 431n16
Robertson, Thomas 17
Roberval, Gilles Personne 370, 529
Roettiers, John 432
Rohault, Jacques 473
Rollond, Nicolas 780n5
Romano, Guilio 227, 548
Roscius (Quintus Roscius Gallus) 470, 685, 690–691, 700, 704, 723, 743, 746–747, 756, 757n11, 784–785
Rotrou, Jean 371, 446, 563
Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste 5, 253
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 26
Roxanne 287–288
Rubens, Albert 468
Rubens, Peter Paul 111n2, 122, 144n15, 192–193, 196, 198, 200–201, 207–208, 218n2, 284–285, 291–292, 365, 367, 388, 388n3, 395, 416, 465–466, 468n174, 505, 558
Rufus 734
Rutter, Joseph 616

Sachs, Hans 374n5
Sadoleto, Jacopo 471
Saisselin, Rémy G. 1
Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus) 114n11, 464, 470
Sannazaro, Jacopo 189, 201, 471
Sappho 168
Sarasin, Jean-François 538
Sarazin (or Sarrazin), Jacques 471

Sarpi, Paolo 594
Saumaise, Claude (Claudius Salmasius) 721n13
Scaliger, Joseph 417n15, 418
Scarron, Paul 182, 336, 561n3, 626
Schrevelius, Cornelius 521
Scipio (Scipio Aemilianus or Scipio Africanus the Younger) 388, 412, 621, 740
Scipio (Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus) 488n14
Scipio (Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus) 488n14
Scudéry, Georges 59, 109n6, 538
Scudéry, Madeleine 109n6, 166n6
Seneca, the Elder 470, 591, 758, 760–761, 768, 772
Seneca, the Younger 171, 179–181, 220, 364, 515, 544, 631, 686, 689, 695n30, 750, 776
Serranus, Joannes (Jean de Serres) 116
Serveto, Miguel (Michael Servetus) 588
Servius/Sergius (Maurus Servius Honoratus) 601, 668
Sesostris, King of Egypt 493
Severus (Lucius Septimius Severus Augustus) 451–452, 455, 457n128–130, 460–461
Sextus V (Felice Peretti di Montalto) 373
Sextus Aurelius Victor 224n34
Sforza, Galeazzo Mario 335–336
Sforza, Ludovico Maria 436n36
Sheridan, Thomas 487n8
Sidonius Apollinaris (Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius) 230, 572, 602, 765
Simonneau, Charles Louis 472
Sirmond, Jacques 473, 765
Sixtus V (Felice Piergentile) 448–449
Smith, Adam 32
Socrates 205, 466, 728, 768
Solinus (Gaius Julius Solinus) 732
Sophocles 141n10, 210n1, 225, 465–466, 695n29, 727, 755 f.
Speroni, Sperone 157–158, 694n27
Spinola, Giambattista, Cardinal 281
Spinoza, Baruch 81
Statius (Publius Papinius Statius) 454, 456, 681
Strabo 619, 683
Strozzi, Filippo, the Younger 471
Suarès, Joseph-Marie, Bishop of Vaison 276
Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus) 111n1, 138n1, 160, 181–182, 219n4, 380n10, 455n115, 609n3, 694–695, 727–728, 736, 739, 762
Suleiman I, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire 623
Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix) 276, 464
Sulzer, Johann Georg 29, 33
Swift, Jonathan 577n23
Synesius of Cyrene 60

Tacitus (Publius Cornelius Tacitus) 55, 111n1, 172, 219–220, 222, 224n34, 265, 423n13, 427, 454, 455n115, 491, 497, 500–501, 515, 529, 542n6, 604, 620, 622, 695, 726n1, 775, 777
Targone, Pompeo 528
Tarquin (Lucius Tarquinius Superbus) 164n3
Tasso, Torquato 13, 42, 151, 246–247, 310, 360, 471, 613
Teles, Baltasar 350
Temple, William, Sir 501
Teniers, David, the Elder 388n4, 388–389, 417
Teniers, David, the Younger 121, 131, 388n4
Terence (Publius Terentius Afer) 54, 178, 182, 210, 212, 238n4, 305, 310, 320–321, 418, 439, 560, 563, 570, 573, 647, 658, 697–698, 703, 721, 722n14, 724
Teresa of Ávila, Saint 241n11
Terrasson, Jean 21, 65–66, 68
Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus) 702, 751, 767, 776
Théodon, Jean-Baptiste 441, 471
Theodoric I, King of the Visigoths 601, 648, 771
Theodosius the Younger (or Theodosius the Calligrapher) 779n3
Thomassin, Louis (Ludovicus Thomassinus) 473
Thucydides 461, 466, 470
Tibaldi, Pellegrino 246, 388n3
Tiberius (Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus) 111, 139, 475, 720, 775
Tibullus (Albius Tibullus) 127, 169, 262, 424, 469, 566
Timanthes of Cythnus 286–287
Timomachus 286
Tintoretto (Jacopo Comin) 367, 388n3

Titian (Tiziano Vecelli) 24, 121, 132, 266, 277, 344–345, 366, 379, 382, 388, 398, 416, 505
Titus Quintus Flaminius 223–224
Thurloe, John 114
Toinard, Nicolas 4, 6
Torquatus (Lucius Manlius Torquatus) 745
Torricelli, Evangelista 527n2, 586
Totila (or Bauduila), Ostrogoth King 778–779, 782
Trabea (Quintus Trabea) 417–418
Trajan (Caesar Nerva Traianus Augustus) 452–455, 460, 696n2, 777
Trogus (Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus) 454

Urban VII, Pope (Barberini, Maffeo) 278n12, 331

Vaillant de Gueslis, François 473
Valentinian (Flavius Placidius Valentinianus Augustus) 601
Valerius Maximus 720
Valois, Henri (Henricus Valesius) 473
Van Almeloveen, Janssonius 588
Van Bercken, Lodewyk 587
Van Der Meulen, Adam Frans 416
Van Dyck, Anthony 367, 388, 388n3, 432, 465, 554, 558
Van Leyden, Lucas 444
Van Schuppen, Pieter 472
Varillas, Antoine 170, 537
Varin, Jean 472
Varius (Lucius Varius Rufus) 424, 469, 689
Varro (Marcus Terentius Varro) 418, 736
Vasari, Giorgio 379, 381n15, 442n60, 548
Velázquez, Diego 381n13, 431n14
Verdelot, Philippe 335
Vermeulen, Cornelius 472
Vernulaeus, Nicolaus 510n2
Veronese, Paolo 233–235, 285, 291–292, 367, 557, 615
Verres (Gaius Verres) 264, 464
Verrio, Antonio 432
Vespasian (Titus Flavius Vespasianus Augustus) 181, 221, 456, 458
Vida, Marco Girolamo 187, 215, 402, 451, 471, 479
Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) 54, 56, 63, 68, 105, 127, 129–130, 135–136, 142n11, 162, 166, 168, 185–189, 194n11, 203, 216, 247, 259, 263–264, 283, 294, 303, 305, 345, 362n13, 365, 368, 372, 379, 381, 386, 393, 395, 395n12, 405, 407–408, 414, 417, 419n1, 424, 439, 443, 447, 450, 454, 469–470, 480, 510, 521, 566–567, 568, 572, 579–580, 596, 599–601, 603–604, 608–613, 626–627, 631, 645, 657, 680n16
Virgil, Polydore (Polydorus Vergilius) 583
Vitellius (Aulus Vietllius Germanicus Augustus) 221, 456, 458
Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio) 199, 299–300, 470, 701, 733
Vittoria, Vincenzo 279
Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) 1, 4, 25–26, 29, 85, 135n2, 183n26, 480n4
Von Guericke, Otto 587
Von Pufendorf, Samuel 497
Vossius, Gerard 703
Vossius, Isaac 322, 325–326, 331, 670
Vouet, Simon 368n24, 446

Wallis, John 665–666
Wilmot, John, Earl of Rochester 174
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim 28–29
Wolff, Christian 18–19, 28
Wotton, William 169–170, 235, 588
Wouwerman, Philips 121
Wycherley, William 183

Xenophon 466

Young, Edward 15

Zeuxis of Heraclea 230, 288
Zosimus (Zosimus Historicus) 646, 768
Zwingli, Ulrich 445n70